THE HICKORY RIDGE SCOUTS

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THE CAMP FIRES OF THE WOLF PATROL

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CAMP FIRES OF THE WOLF PATROL

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It proved to be interesting work.

THE HICKORY RIDGE BOY SCOUTS

CAMP FIRES OF THE WOLF PATROL

BY

CAPTAIN ALAN DOUGLAS
SCOUT MASTER

THE NEW YORK BOOK COMPANY
NEW YORK

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CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	In Camp on the Sweetwater	17
II.	The Sudden Peril	26
III.	Ginger Plays with Fire	33
IV.	A Never-To-Be-Forgotten Supper	41
V.	What Was It?	49
VI.	The Boy Scouts' Water-Boiling Test	57
VII.	The Lost Sky Traveler	65
VIII.	A Blazed Trail	73
IX.	What the Lone Cabin Contained	81
X.	Wigwagging from the Mountain Peak	89
XI.	The Hairy Thief that Walked on Two Legs	97
XII.	Laying a Ghost	105
XIII.	Taken by Surprise	113
XIV.	The Things that Make Boys Manly	121
XV.	How the Trap Worked	129
XVI.	The Last Flickering Camp Fire Dies Out	137

G.M. TRANSFER MAY 17 1939

CAMP FIRES OF THE WOLF PATROL

THE HICKORY RIDGE BOY SCOUTS

CAMP FIRES OF THE WOLF PATROL.

CHAPTER I.

IN CAMP ON THE SWEETWATER.

A TROOP of khaki-clad boys had been marching, rather wearily perhaps, along a road that, judging from all indications, was not very much used by the natives.

The afternoon was waning, so that a summer's night would soon begin to close in around them. Dense woods lay in all directions, the foliage of which had afforded very pleasant shelter from the fierce rays of the August sun.

"Halt!" came the loud order.

"Hurrah! we're going into our first camp, fellows!"

"Is that so, Mr. Garrabrant?"

"Pull off your lids, boys, and give a salute!"

"What a dandy old place for a camp. How d'ye suppose he came to pick this out, Elmer?"

"That's as easy to tell as falling off a log, Toby. We have to use water to cook with; and just notice this fine stream running past us," returned the boy addressed, who seemed to be the second in command of the detachment of scouts. "Besides," he added, "you forget that we aimed to reach the Sweetwater River by evening, so that we could start up the current in our boats to-morrow morning. And this, I reckon, is the stream that we're looking for."

"Hurrah again, fellows! The day's hike is done. Now for a bully rest!"

"Stand at attention, all! Call the roll, secretary, to

see if there are any stragglers!" the scout master commanded, as the small troop ranged up before him.

This young man was Mr. Roderic Garrabrant, who had only too gladly assumed the rôle he occupied, being greatly interested in the boy problem; and possessing a few fads and fancies he wished to work out by actual experience. His knowledge of woodcraft was not so very extensive; but the moral effect of his presence was expected to exert considerable benefit in connection with the dozen or more members of the Hickory Ridge troop of Boy Scouts.

The small town of Hickory Ridge lay about seven miles due south of the place where they had struck the winding Sweetwater; and the party had tramped this distance since noon. While it might not seem very far to those who are accustomed to long walks, there were a number among the scouts who had undoubtedly exceeded their record on this same afternoon.

An exceedingly tall and ungainly lad, with long legs that seemed to just delight getting in the way at times, threatening to twist him in a knot, drew out a little pocket volume, and in a sing-song tone started to call off numerous names.

Each boy answered promptly when he heard his own name mentioned; and as they will very likely figure largely in our story, it might be just as well to take note of the manner in which Arthur Stansbury called them off:

"Members of the Wolf Patrol: Elmer Chenowith, Mark Cummings, Ted Burgoyne, Toby Ellsworth Jones, Arthur Stansbury, and Chatz Maxfield.

"Members of the Beaver Patrol: Matty Eggleston, Oscar Huggins, Tyrus Collins, Jasper Merriweather, Tom Cropsey, Lawrence Billings.

"Unattached, but to form Numbers One and Two of the new Eagle Patrol: Jack Armitage and Nathan Scott."

"We seem to be just two shy," observed Mr. Garrabrant, with a twinkle in his eye, as he turned toward Elmer Chenowith, who had recently received his certificate as assistant scout master from the National Council, and was really qualified to take the place of the leader whenever the latter chanced to be absent.

Elmer raised his hand promptly in salute, as he made reply:

"Yes, sir; Nat Scott and Jasper Merriweather. They pegged out a mile or so back; and after examining their feet, and finding that they were really sore from walking, I gave them permission to ride on the commissary wagon, sir."

Now, of course Mr. Garrabrant knew all this perfectly well. He had actually watched the pair of tenderfeet only too gladly clamber aboard the wagon that bore the tents, food, extra clothing, and cooking outfit for the camp. But thus far did military tactics rule the Boy Scouts, that he was supposed to know nothing about such incidents until they had been reported to him in the proper manner, as provided for in the system.

"Suppose then you notify them, Mr. Bugler," said the scout master, turning to Mark Cummings, who, besides being the especial chum of Elmer, was really a fine musician, and naturally had been unanimously chosen as bugler for the new troop of scouts recently organized in Hickory Ridge.

When the clear, penetrating notes of the bugle sounded through the neighboring woods, there came a faint but enthusiastic cheer from some point along the back trail. In addition, the waiting scouts could catch the plain creaking of a wagon, accompanied by encouraging words, spoken undeniably by a "gentleman of color."

"Git up dar, youse ol' sleepy-haid, Andy Jackson! Wot

youse t'ink we's gwine tuh do up hyah in dis neck ob de woods, hey? Git a mobe on yuh, Jawdge Washington! Jes' quit dat peekin' outen de tail end ob yuh eye at me! We ain't playin' dat ere game ob politics now; dis am real, honest, sure-nuff work. Altogedder now, bofe ob youse; or de waggin dun stick in de mud of dis crick!"

Then followed a few whacks, as the energetic driver applied the goad, some startled snorts, in turn succeeded by another relay of faint cheers from the two footsore scouts aboard the wagon.

And presently the lumbering vehicle, with its sweating steeds, halted alongside the site selected by the scout master as the spot for the first camp of the scouts' outing. An opening was readily found where Ginger, the ebony driver, might urge his reluctant team to leave the hard road, and enter among the trees.

Immediately a scene of great bustle, and more or less confusion ensued; for it must be remembered that while the Hickory Ridge scouts may have drilled in the work of starting a camp, that was only theory, and the present was their first actual practice on record.

The contents of the wagon were overhauled, and several tents started to go up on spots particularly selected by the leaders of the patrols, who had this duty in their sole charge.

Here Elmer had a great advantage over all his fellows, since he had spent much of his life up in the Canadian Northwest, where his father had held a position as manager to extensive lands that were being farmed on a colossal scale, until a year or so previous, when, being left a snug little fortune, Mr. Chenowith had decided to return to his native state, to settle down for the balance of his days.

Of course the boy had picked up a considerable amount of useful knowledge during his stay in that country of

vast distances, which was likely to prove of use to him in his experiences as a scout.

They had elected him as president of the troop, and he had readily been given the position of scout leader in the Wolf Patrol because of this wide range of knowledge pertaining to the secrets of outdoor life. It had also been mainly instrumental in securing for him the coveted certificate from Headquarters, recognizing him as a capable assistant to Mr. Garrabrant.

Elmer could toss a rope, follow a trail, throw a "diamond hitch" in loading a pack horse, travel on snowshoes, recognize most wild animals just from their tracks, make a camp properly, and do so many other like tricks that made him the envy of his mates, and especially Matty Eggleston, who was the leader of the Beaver Patrol, and had much to learn concerning his duties.

It was a cheerful scene, as the tents were raised, and fires began to crackle, one for each patrol, according to custom. Even the two limping scouts forgot their recent lameness, and began to sniff the air hungrily when Ginger started to get supper for the crowd.

Ginger had qualified as an expert first-class cook, but the truth might as well be stated right in the beginning that the boys quickly tired of the greasy messes the son of Ethiopia flung together, and soon followed the example of the Wolf Patrol, doing their own cooking, an arrangement that pleased the good-natured but indolent Ginger perfectly. He was always on hand, however, when the time for eating came around, being possessed of an enormous appetite that alarmed Mr. Garrabrant more than a little.

Night had closed in long before supper was ready, for things somehow worked at sixes and sevens on the occasion of the getting of the first meal, since many essential articles had to be hunted for, entailing a loss of time. But all this

would be remedied as soon as they were in their permanent camp, for both Mr. Garrabrant and Elmer were keen on system and order.

The boys were almost famished after that seven-mile hike, and could hardly wait for the signal to "fall to." But there was an abundance for all, and none of them was much inclined to be what Arthur Stansbury called "finicky" that night.

Mr. Garrabrant, however, while eating, looked suspiciously toward Ginger, and shook his head in the direction of Elmer, as if to say that if this mess were a fair specimen of the cook's best efforts along the culinary line, the sooner they started in to depend on themselves the better for their digestion.

After the meal had been finished the boys left Ginger to clean up while they lay around, enjoying the sparkling blaze, something that most of them were not very familiar with. For the time being all formality was thrown aside, and they laughed and chatted, just as normal boys are prone to do when out upon a holiday jaunt.

Mr. Garrabrant showed the two laggards how they had been unwise not immediately to dislodge sundry small pebbles that had found a way to get in their shoes, with the consequence that presently stone bruises had formed that became painful. He made them easy with some lotion he carried for just such a purpose.

In this and dozens of other ways the efficient scout master expected to teach the boys of the troop how to take care of themselves when away from home. But the lads who had to be told *the same thing twice* might expect to forfeit some privilege since they were expected to think for themselves, after being shown.

There was also a second colored man along, who expected to take the team back on the morrow, since the scouts would

have no further need of it, once they embarked in the boats that were to meet them here. In these they expected to ascend the Sweetwater to a small lake called Jupiter; and from thence by way of Paradise Creek find a passage to Lake Solitude beyond, where they meant to camp and learn the numerous " stunts " a good scout should know.

Some of the lads had fair voices, and school songs were sung around the fire, Mark doing the accompanying with soft notes on his bugle. He had mastered this instrument, and his mates never wearied of hearing him play.

Ted Burgoyne was afflicted with a slight lisp that gave him no end of trouble; though he always insisted that he spoke as correctly as any of his companions. Ted had a strong leaning toward the profession of a surgeon, and indeed was forever loudly wishing for a subject upon whom to operate. The boys had considerable fun over this weakness, but all the same they must have felt more or less confidence in his ability to do the right thing; for whenever any slight accident occurred it might be noticed that every one in camp called upon " Dr. Ted " to take hold; and he nearly always proved himself equal to the occasion.

Charlie Maxfield, or Chatz as he was universally called, was somewhat of a queer chap. He believed in ghosts, and was always reading stories of hobgoblins and haunted houses. Of course, with such a propensity, Chatz could be depended on to try and frighten his chums from time to time. He was forever " seeing things " in the dark.

The rest of the boys had plenty of fun with Chatz, which he took in good part; but although, as a rule, his alarms proved to be false ones nothing seemed to disturb his deep-rooted convictions. They even said he carried a rabbit's foot, for good luck, the animal having been killed by Chatz himself in a graveyard, and in the full of the moon.

Needless to say Chatz Maxfield was a Southern-born lad,

as his accent alone proved. He was a fine fellow, taken as a whole, outside of this silly belief in ghosts, which he possibly imbibed from the small darkies with whom he played on his father's Georgia plantation, years back.

"I don't see any boats around here, fellows!" remarked Ty Collins, when there came a little lull in the conversation, after Mr. Garrabrant had been explaining some puzzling matter that one of the boys had put up to him.

"Why, that's a fact!" exclaimed "Lil Artha," as the long-legged secretary, Arthur Stansbury was called by his mates—he was a devoted amateur photographer, and even then had been busying himself with some part of his equipment as he sat by the fire.

Arthur was keenly desirous of learning all the various kinks that a first class scout must know. He was somewhat of a joker in his way, and at times a little addicted to the use of current slang; but a warm-hearted, impulsive lad all the same.

"They are to be on hand in the morning, boys," remarked Mr. Garrabrant. "And of course we shall not think of leaving here until they come. Make your minds easy on that score, Nat and Jasper. Your heels will have a chance to get well, never fear."

"Where's Chatz?" asked one of the other boys, suddenly.

"He asked permission to walk back a bit over our trail," observed Elmer. "Said he missed a buckle from his coat, which he was carrying over his arm when he tripped. I let him take a lantern with him to see if he could find it."

"Lil Artha" began to laugh, and several of the other boys joined in.

"Oh! my! what if he happens to run across one of those ghosts he's always talking about?" suggested Toby Ellsworth Jones, whose grandfather had been a veteran, and a

soldier under the colonel who died at Alexandria, Va., in the Civil War; whence the name of Ellsworth—Toby was just wild on the subject of aeronautics; and while thus far everything he attempted had proven as flat a failure as the famous flying machine of Darius Green, still he lived in hopes of accomplishing something that would make the name of Jones renowned.

Several of the boys struggled to their feet at this, finding themselves stiff in the legs after their long walk.

"Look! there's a light coming just flying along the road right now!" cried Larry Billings.

"And that must be Chatz on the full run, though he wouldn't yell out for anything!" exclaimed Mark.

"Something must be chasing him, fellows!" declared Toby, in great excitement.

"Perhaps it's a wildcat!" suggested Jasper Merriweather, who was a bit timid.

"Here he comes, and he can speak for himself. What ails you, Charlie; what happened to start you running?" asked the scout master, as the boy came hurrying up, breathing hard, and showing signs of positive alarm.

"Reckon I saw something, suh, that was mighty mysterious!" replied Chatz; at which the entire group of scouts looked at each other, and held their breath in awe.

CHAPTER II.

THE SUDDEN PERIL.

"I SEE you found your buckle, Chatz," remarked Elmer, noticing what the other was holding in the hand that was not occupied in grasping the lighted lantern.

"Oh! yes, I picked that up where I tripped, and nearly fell flat," replied the other, quickly. "Just as I got up off my knees I happened to look alongside the road, where the trees grow so thick, and I give you my word, fellows, I saw a moving white figure that had the most terrible yellow eyes ever! I know you all laugh at me whenever I say I believe in ghosts; but if that wasn't one I miss my guess, yes suh."

"I'll dare you to go back with me till we find out," said Elmer, quickly.

Chatz hesitated; but for all his silly notions in this one line the boy was far from being a coward.

"All right, if you say so, I'm willing," he declared. "I'd just like to know what that was, anyhow, if not a specter. Come on, Elmer."

"Take me along, won't you?" asked Lil Artha, gaining his feet, as he thrust his kodak away.

"Me, too!" called out several others; while a few hung back, not caring to take chances of a meeting with a real ghost.

"You can go along, Arthur, likewise Ted and Toby. The rest had better stay here with me to guard the camp, in case

there happens to be a raid of ghosts," remarked the scout master, in a tone that put an end to all protestations.

So the little party trotted off, followed by wishful glances from the balance of those who would have liked to be with them.

Down the road they went, Chatz keeping in close contact with Elmer, and maintaining a discreet silence. Presently they arrived at the spot where he had found the missing buckle.

"Here's where I stooped down to hunt, boys," he remarked, in a low voice; "and when I looked over yonder, I saw IT standing just back of that fringe of brush, waving its long arms at me, and staring to beat the band. Do you see anything there, fellows?"

"Not a thing, Chatz," replied Artha, cheerfully. "To the foolish house for you!"

"What's that?" said Toby, holding up his hand, suddenly.

"Did you see anything move?" demanded the Southern lad, eagerly, as though he wanted to prove that his alarm had been well founded.

"I thought I did," replied Toby, quivering with eagerness.

"Listen, fellows," observed Elmer, with a chuckle.

From somewhere back in the woods there came a weird sound, mournful enough to strike a chill to the heart of anyone not familiar with its nature.

"Oh! whatever can that be?" cried Toby. "Sounded just like some poor feller calling for help."

"Elmer, you know; tell uth, pleath!" entreated Ted, with his usual lisp, which even the alarm that was seizing hold of him now could not dissipate.

"Well, I declare, I'm surprised to think that none of you

fellows ever heard an owl hoot before!" laughed the scout leader of the Wolf Patrol.

"An owl—that only a poor little dickey of an owl!" cried Toby.

"Yes, it sounds just like the white owl we used to have up in Canada," continued Elmer, seriously. "And ten to one now, it was what Chatz here saw in that brush alongside the road. Of course it had staring yellow eyes; and in the dim light he must have fancied he saw an arm waving at him. That was only a shadow, Chatz. So come along, let's get back to the fire."

"Well, anyway, it looked mighty spooky," declared the Southern boy, stubbornly.

And he persisted in this attitude, even when some of his companions, who might not have been one half so brave as Chatz, if ever put to the test, began to "josh" him because of his recent alarm.

Mr. Garrabrant, accompanied by Elmer, went the rounds to ascertain just how the boys had erected their tents. He found little cause for complaint, since the young assistant scout master had drilled the members of the troop in this science, and they had it down quite pat, at least so far as theory went.

While the Boy-Scout movement of to-day has little to do with military tactics, still discipline is taught; and numerous things that soldiers employ in their daily life are practiced. One of these is setting a guard at night, and teaching the boys the necessity of keeping watchful when in the woods.

Each patrol had to set a guard or sentry, and lay out a plan whereby the various members would take turns in standing duty during some period of the night.

The two unattached scouts were temporarily added to the

six composing the Wolf Patrol, so that they might come under the charge of Elmer, and profit from his instruction.

By ten o'clock the camp had relapsed into a condition of silence. "Taps" had been sounded on the bugle, which meant that every light must be extinguished except the two fires; and each scout not on duty seek his blanket.

Of course there was more or less whispering from time to time; and apparently it was a hard thing for some of the boys to settle down to sleep. But both Mr. Garrabrant and Elmer knew boy nature full well, and for this one night were disposed to overlook little infractions of the rules. But later on they would expect to hold the entire troop rigidly to discipline, when the time for skylarking had gone by.

Elmer had left word with the boy from the Wolf Patrol who first went on duty to awaken him if anything out of the way occurred. And in turn he was to transmit the order to the fellow who succeeded him.

When a hand gripped his arm as he lay under his blanket Elmer was immediately awakened; nor did he evince the slightest alarm.

"What is it?" he asked, softly, not wishing to arouse the others in the tent, who were sound asleep, if their heavy breathing stood for anything.

"Something moving on the river, and I thought you ought to know," replied the one who had crept excitedly under the canvas.

"All right, Toby, I'm coming after you. Back out!" replied Elmer, as he wriggled from under his comfortable blanket, and pulled on his trousers; for the air of an August night often feels decidedly chilly, especially after one has been snuggled beneath covers.

He found the fires had died down, though the boys made

sure that they did not wholly go out, since they had no great love for the darkness.

"Listen! There it goes again," remarked Toby, once more clutching the sleeve of the scout leader in a nervous hand.

Elmer chuckled.

"Well, this is a funny thing," he said, as though amused. "First Chatz takes a poor old owl with its yellow eyes for a ghost, and now you imagine the dip of oars to be something as mysterious and thrilling. Why, don't you make out two sets plashing at different times. Those are the boats we expect. Perhaps the men from Rockaway down the river were delayed; or else they preferred to do their rowing after the sun set. But that's all it means, Toby."

"Aw! well, I thought it my duty to let you know," observed the other.

"And you did quite right, Toby. But I'd better try and get Mr. Garrabrant out here without awakening the lot, if it can be done," and saying this Elmer started toward the second tent, where the scout master had some four boys under his especial charge.

It proved to be just as Elmer had guessed. The two men who rowed the boats had preferred to do their work after the heat of day had gone by. They would not even pass the balance of the night in camp, being anxious to get back to Rockaway, the town some five miles down the river.

So this little excitement died away, and once more silence brooded over the camp on the Sweetwater. The night passed without any further alarm; and with the coming of morning the clear notes of the bugle sounding the reveille aroused the last sleepers, and caused them to crawl forth, rubbing their eyes and yawning.

Mark's grandfather had been a famous artist, and the

boy bade fair to some day follow in his illustrious footsteps. He was forever drawing exceedingly apt pictures, with pencil, a bit of chalk, a scrap of charcoal or anything that came handy; and as a rule these were humorous caricatures of his chums in many amusing attitudes. So he now busied himself catching the sleepy scouts in various striking postures, to the great delight of those who gathered around.

Between Mark's readiness with the crayon and the eagerness of Lil Artha to use his camera, it seemed likely that little worth remembering would escape being handed down to illustrate the events of this, their first outing.

"Me for a bully good swim!" exclaimed the long-legged boy, as he started for the nearby river.

Others were quick to follow his example, for few healthy boys there are to whom the opportunity for splashing in the water on a summer morn does not appeal.

"Keep on your guard, fellows!" called Mr. Garrabrant, who was busily employed doing something near one of the tents. "The current is swift, and unless I miss my guess the river is quite deep here. Elmer, you go along and watch out that no one comes to harm," and he turned once again to his task, confident that his assistant was capable of executing his wishes properly.

Ten minutes passed away, and Mr. Garrabrant, having managed successfully to complete the little job he had set himself to execute, was thinking it time the boys who were bathing should be recalled, when he heard sudden cries that pierced him like an arrow.

"Hey! look at Jasper, would you, how funny he acts!"

"Elmer! Elmer! come here! Jasper's got a cramp! He's gone down!"

Hurriedly did the alarmed scout master leap to his feet and start wildly in the direction of these loud outcries. No

doubt in that second of time he saw the faces of the Merriweather boy's parents, filled with the agony that comes to those who have lost a son by drowning; nd the mental picture sent Mr. Garrabrant flying over the ground.

CHAPTER III.

GINGER PLAYS WITH FIRE.

At the time the loud cries had come, Elmer was just leaving the water himself, having had enough of a morning bath. He saw several of the boys running toward a point down stream, where Ty Collins and Nat Scott were when they shouted, and without wasting a second Elmer had sped that way.

So fast did he run that he easily outstripped the rest, and reached the spot where Ty and Nat stood on the bank, beckoning wildly to him, while they stared out upon the eddying water.

One look Elmer gave. It enabled him to glimpse something white emerging from the foamy water, and a pair of arms beat wildly in the air. Then he sprang in, and hand over hand made for the spot.

Luckily he had arrived just below, so that the chances of his reaching the drowning lad were better than would have otherwise been the case if he had the swift current against him.

Perhaps in all his life Elmer Chenowith never struck out with such intense eagerness, for he had seen that something serious must have happened to Jasper, since he was under the surface of the water most of the time and undoubtedly gulping in great quantities of it.

Keeping his eyes fastened on the struggling figure as best he could, Elmer made his way furiously through the surging Sweetwater. Just at this place, on account of a decided

drop in the bed of the river, there was a swift current and considerable foam around the rocks that partly blocked the rapids.

"He's got him!" shrilled Tom Cropsey.

"But look out, Elmer; don't let him get a grip on you! Size up the way Jasper is fighting to get hold of him! Oh! he nearly did it, then! What ought we to do, fellows? If he grabs Elmer they'll just both drown!"

It was Red Huggins who thus gave vent to his feelings. He generally became so excited in an emergency that he could not collect his wits enough to be of any great use. And it was fortunate that all of those present were not built upon the same model as impulsive Red.

Mr. Garrabrant had snatched up a rope as he ran. Perhaps, with rare wisdom the long-headed scout master had even placed it there, looking to a possible sudden need for such a thing.

He had no occasion to ask where the thrilling event was taking place. Every boy was staring in that one quarter, and before he even saw the two figures in the swirl of the yeasty river Mr. Garrabrant realized the condition of affairs.

He found that Elmer had managed to seize the drowning boy from behind, always the very best method of doing in such a case. Had he been unable to accomplish this, and the frenzied Jasper seized upon him, doubtless Elmer would have broken away, even though he might have had to strike the other quite sharply in the face and partly stun him to do so. Better that, than that both should go down together.

So Elmer was endeavoring to push the other in toward shore. Sometimes the water would go over them both with a rush, for they happened to be in one of the roughest parts of the river.

Mr. Garrabrant sized up the situation at a single glance. Then he ran down the shore a dozen paces, and started to wade into the river.

"Here, take hold of this end of the rope, boys!" he cried, as he came upon several of the scouts who were standing knee deep in the water, seemingly half paralyzed by the terrible nature of the scene before them.

Mark Cummings had just arrived on the scene. He had been dressing in the tent at the time the alarm sounded. Regardless of the fact that he had on his clothes, he sprang into the water alongside the scout master.

Together they buffeted the waves, and made for the approaching pair. Elmer saw them coming and redoubled his efforts to keep the drowning boy afloat, and at the same time avoid being clasped in his desperate embrace.

Then friendly hands were laid upon them, and with three to take charge, Jasper was borne to the land. He had collapsed before the shore was reached, and the balance of the boys gathered around, staring in great fear at his pallid face.

Mr. Garrabrant knew the theory of restoring a person who has come very near being drowned; but it chanced that Elmer had more than once had active participation in that sort of work. So he lost no time in stretching poor Jasper, face down, on the ground, placing his knees on his back, and having his arms worked regularly by some of the boys, while he pressed downward, again and again with considerable force, so as to induce artificial breathing.

As Jasper was not far gone he quickly responded to this rough but effective treatment. He belched out a small Niagara of water, groaned, trembled, and finally tried to beg them to have a little mercy on him, saying that he was now all right, upon which the boys of course ceased their efforts intended to bring him to.

Breakfast was slow in coming along that morning. Ginger had been tremendously unnerved by the exciting spectacle of the rescue of the drowning lad, and he continuously made all sorts of foolish blunders while trying to cook, so that in the end Mr. Garrabrant chased him away and set Elmer and Ty Collins at the job, both of whom he knew were very good cooks.

Afterwards the tents had to come down, and the entire outfit be stored away in the two boats which were intended to carry them the balance of the way.

Ginger sent the horse and wagon back in charge of the other colored man, and announced himself prepared to accompany the troop into the heart of the wilderness. He was so good-natured, and they could make use of him to do much of the drudgery of the camp; so Mr. Garrabrant decided to let Ginger go along, even though he was not to be trusted to get their meals any longer.

The boats were stoutly built, and of a good size. Both were capable of being rowed by two pairs of oars; and, indeed, this was rendered quite necessary by the swiftness of the Sweetwater in parts.

Once they reached the first little lake and the worst part of the struggle would be over; after that the going must prove much easier.

At first the scouts considered the rowing a picnic. That lasted less than ten minutes. Then, as the strain of the current started to tell upon them, grunts began to be heard, and these were followed by heavy sighs and glum faces.

Blisters began to appear on palms that were quite unused to labor of this severe kind. True, Mr. Garrabrant in one boat, and Elmer in the other, tried to show the greenhorns how they could save themselves much of this pain by proper handling of the oars; but like everything else, experience after all was bound to be the best guide.

A number of the lads, however, were more or less familiar with rowing, even though there was no body of water close to the town on the railroad known as Hickory Ridge. Of course Elmer himself took an oar, and kept up his part of the drudgery from start to finish; and his chum Mark also did his share with credit.

There were places where the river widened, and the current was less savage. Here those who tugged at the oars managed to rest up a bit for the next hard pull.

So the morning passed with frequent rests, for Mr. Garrabrant knew better than utterly to weary his command in the beginning. They were, after all, out for sport; and it would have been an unwise move on his part to have sickened the tenderfeet scouts before they had had a fair chance to get hardened to it.

Just before noon the boy in the bow of the leading boat gave a yell.

"What is it?" asked the scout master.

"I just had a squint at a body of water, sir; and I think it must have been a lake," replied Jack Armitage, who was in the boat with the Wolf Patrol, Ginger working one of the oars in the other craft.

"That must be the first lake, Jupiter they call it," Mr. Garrabrant went on.

"Hurrah! that means a rest, and lunch, fellows!" cried Lil Artha, who had been resting after his turn at rowing.

"Don't crow too soon," barked Toby, mysteriously. "The worst is yet to come. Remember that these two lakes are joined by Paradise Creek. I've heard that stream is worse than the river here to pull against."

"That's where you're mistaken, Toby," remarked Elmer. "I talked with a lumberman, and also a sportsman who comes up here every fall to shoot wild ducks on the lake they call Solitude. Both of them assured me that once

we got to this point our troubles would be over. So cheer up, my hearties, the pulling will be a picnic after this."

Then they passed out from the head of the romantic Sweetwater. The lake was a pretty little sheet of water, with shores that, as a rule, were wooded; though in several places it looked as though farms ran down to the water's edge.

The boys soon clamored to get ashore and stretch their weary legs; nor was Mr. Garrabrant in the least averse to such a change himself. It is always inducive to cramp to sit in a boat several hours.

Lunch was eaten under a patch of friendly trees that grew on the bank. Then the troop was allowed half an hour to lounge around, ere once more embarking for the afternoon row.

Just where they had landed it was very wild. Rocks jutted up out of the sides of the hills, and the trees grew in every crevice where earth had gathered.

Toby was lying on his back, looking longingly up at the bald top of a neighboring elevation that might almost be called a mountain.

"Say," he said to Red, who happened to be sprawled out near him, "did you ever in all your days see such a splendid place as that for a starter? Just think what a jolly good thing it would be to stand there on the edge of that cliff and just give one big spring off, flapping your wings as you jumped. Wow! I can see myself sailing through space, and coming down as gently as a thistle ball. But how could a fellow ever get up there in the first place?—that's what's bothering me."

"Look here, Toby, you don't really mean to say that if you had those silly old wings along with you, anything'd ever tempt you to take such chances as to jump off that high place? Why, it'd be your finish sure, if you ever did.

You'd come down with an awful jar. And ten to one we'd have to gather your poor remains up with a shovel. I'm glad Mr. Garrabrant refused to let you fetch along all that stuff you had laid out to bring."

"He near broke my heart when he said that, Red," sighed Toby. "But we're going to be up here some time, you know, and perhaps I might get a chance to rig up some sort of flying machine. I'll never be happy till I'm sailing through the clouds, and that's a fact."

"Your heart could stand it better than your blessed neck," retorted Red. "And that's what would have happened to you, sure, if he'd let you try to play your game of being aviator to the troop."

"Sit still, fellows!" sang out the photographer just then; "I've got you in just a dandy picture, the entire bunch! There, done with a click, and thank you."

Mr. Garrabrant sat up and looked at his watch.

"About time we were moving, boys," he remarked, at which there were numerous uplifted eyebrows, and not a few groans, as the unfortunate tenderfeet looked at the red spots in the palms of their hands, unused to hard work.

Of course, as there was little to pack, it would be a matter of only a few minutes ere they could be on the move again, and speeding up Jupiter Lake toward the link that connected with the other sheet of water.

"All here?" asked Mr. Garrabrant, as a precautionary measure; since some of the scouts had shown a weakness for wandering whenever half a chance arose.

Elmer had just been in the act of counting heads.

"We seem to be one shy, sir," he remarked.

"It's Ginger," declared one of the scouts. "I noticed him walking off some little time ago, sir. He told me somebody said there was gold up in these mountains, and the poor old silly was lookin' for signs of it, I guess."

"Give him a call on the bugle, Mark!" said Elmer, looking annoyed; for it would be too bad if, after all their plans, Ginger should take it into his head to delay them now by getting lost.

So the bugler let out a blast that could easily be heard a mile away. Then they one and all listened to discover if any answer came floating back.

"I heahs yuh, suh," came the voice of Ginger from the neighboring woods. "I'se jes' be'n havin' heaps o' fun wid dis leetle snake hyah. Glory be, but he am de maddest critter yuh eber see, a shaking ob his tail; an' de locust asingin' in de tree."

"Keep away from him, Ginger!" shouted Elmer, jumping up; "keep away from him, I tell you! My stars! that must be a rattlesnake he's been playing with!"

CHAPTER IV.

A NEVER-TO-BE-FORGOTTEN SUPPER.

And a rattlesnake it proved to be, sure enough!

When Elmer, followed helter-skelter by every one of the others, drew near the spot where Ginger stood, with a short stick in his hand, and now looking very much frightened after hearing what a narrow escape he had had, they discovered the angry poisonous reptile coiled, and buzzing away at a great rate.

Locusts had been singing near by during the drowsy noon hour, and that accounted not only for the common mistake of the black man, but why none of the others had paid any attention to the sound. Several remembered having heard it, when their memory was jogged later.

Elmer quickly found a longer pole with which he assailed the coiled terror of the rocky hills, and with a lucky stroke he finally broke its back. All the boys crowded around to look at the ugly thing, shuddering as they noted its vicious fangs.

"Better look out, fellowth," warned Dr. Ted. "I've heard they often hunt in coupleth, tho' there may be another of the vermin near by!"

But a hasty search failed to reveal a mate to the dead reptile. Mr. Garrabrant seized upon the occasion to read a lecture to the scouts, telling them to live up to their motto, "Be prepared," and always keep an eye out when in the woods.

"That's one danger we must never forget up here," he said; "and I've got a little phial I want every scout to

carry along with him constantly. To-night I'm going to explain just how to act in case any one of you finds himself struck by a snake, which, however, I sincerely hope will never happen, because they're nasty things at best, and there's always a chance that the remedy may not work in time to save the patient."

Ginger begged for the rattle, to serve as a reminder of his narrow escape, and so Elmer cut it off for him.

"If I had time I'd like to skin the beast," the latter remarked, "for he's beautifully marked, and would make a nice tie, or a pocketbook. But in order to make a good job I'd require an hour or more, and we don't want to carry the thing along with us until night."

"Why do you say 'he' when you mention the rattler, Elmer?" asked Mr. Garrabrant, who was not above seeking new information from one who had been fortunate enough to experience the actual realities of wild life.

"Well, you see that the skin has black diamond-shaped marks on it. If it had been a female these would have been more along a brownish order. At any rate, that's what I've been told out where I met with these things frequently," Elmer stated.

"And I've no doubt but what you're quite right, Elmer," remarked the scout master. "I've noticed the same thing in connection with quite a number of birds, the female being coated a modest brown, whereas the male was a lustrous black. But we must be moving. I'm glad, Ginger, that it isn't necessary to practice on you for snake-bite."

"Yas," muttered the black man, "an' de wustest t'ing 'bout de hull bizness am de fack dat dey ain't eben a single drap ob snake pizen in de hull bilin crowd. So 'deed, I is right glad myself now dat de leetle critter didn't git tuh me."

"And there goeth the only chance I've had this many a day to get a little anatomical practice," Ted was grumbling; though of course the boys understood that although his manner of talk might seem so blood-thirsty, the amateur surgeon was only joking.

But Ginger, after that, often watched Ted suspiciously and refused to be left alone in camp with him.

Ten minutes of stout rowing brought them to the mouth of Paradise Creek, where the waters from the other lake emptied into Jupiter. Joyfully they started to navigate these unknown regions. Elmer's boat was in the lead, though for that matter not a single one in the party had ever before been as far up the chains of waterways as this.

When even the scout master realized that those who handled the oars were becoming exhausted, he called a halt and changed around, bringing fresh recruits forward. He himself did yeoman service pulling, and Ginger also made his muscles add considerable value to the progress of the second boat.

"Dis am suah de t'ing tuh make de appatite," Ginger kept saying, as he tugged away, with the perspiration rolling down his black good-natured face. "Specks I done want dubble rations dis berry night, Cap'n. De laborer am worthy ob his hire, de good book say. An' dis am sartin suah hard wuk."

As the afternoon slowly passed they realized that they must be getting closer and closer to the second sheet of water. Nobody was sorry. And when the sun hung over the elevated horizon anxious looks began to be cast ahead.

Finally, almost without warning, the leading boat ran out of the creek, passing around an abrupt bend, and a shout of delight announced that the lake had been reached at last.

It was indeed well named. Solitude seemed to hang over the whole picture, and if it could impress them in this way while the sun was still shining, what gloom must follow after the shades of night had fallen.

"Look around on this shore for a good site for a permanent camp, Elmer," remarked the scout master, pointing to the left. "I choose that because we will get some shelter from the wind, in case of a sudden storm. Across the broad lake it would be apt to hit us doubly hard. Am I correct, Elmer?" Mr. Garrabrant went on.

"Yes, sir," replied the boy, quickly, "I should have done just as you did, and I think I can see a good spot for our camp; anyhow it looks that way from here. Give way again, fellows, and I'll head the boat for our haven."

Ten minutes later, and the two boats had been run ashore. Then an eager troop of aching lads tumbled out, to stretch themselves, and express delight over having finally reached their goal. Quite a number of them had really never before been away from home over night, so that it required more or less assumption of gayety on their part to conceal their real feelings. But by degrees these would grow accustomed to the separation, and in the end it was bound to make them more manly fellows.

Once again were the tents pitched. This time more care was taken, for they anticipated a long stay, and ere breaking camp for the return trip it was not unlikely that they would be visited by one or more storms. So the stakes were driven well in, and each tent had a little gulley dug around the upper side, so as to turn water to the right and left in case of a flood in the shape of a down-pour.

Other of the scouts started making fire-places from the numerous stones. They had had practice along these lines before now, closer at home, and the watchful eyes of the scout leaders took note of everything that was being

done. When they saw that matters were not going just as cleverly as they could, a few words, perhaps a helping hand, straightened out the difficulty.

By the time the sun passed beyond an outlying spur of the mountain things began to take on a pretty decent look. Several of the boys who were fond of fishing had been set to work digging bait, and going in the boats to likely spots pointed out by the experienced Elmer. Their excited cries presently announced that there was some prospect of the bill-of-fare that night having the magic name of "trout" among the tasty food exhibit.

"And my word for it we'll need all we can get," laughed Mr. Garrabrant aside to his assistant, as he nodded his head to where Ginger was working lustily, and smacking his lips as he kept one eye on the busy fisherman, "because Ginger tells me he's awful fond of trout! It's going to keep me hustling to supply all the appetites in this Camp Content of ours; for they're developing most alarmingly."

But really Mr. Garrabrant was joking. He had foreseen just such a condition as this, knowing boys as well as he did, and made sure to add good measure to the quantity of food first planned for.

The fishermen presently brought in what catch they had made. Every one was both surprised and delighted to see the splendid size of the trout that had taken the bait.

"Why, this sure is a great snap!" exclaimed Lil Artha, who had been looking all around for various views which he anticipated capturing on succeeding days. "We can have the toothsome trout whenever the spirit moves, and the fishermen get busy."

"And they pull like a house afire, too," declared Matty Eggleston, who had been one of the anglers. "I've caught black bass lots of times, but this is my first trout experience. Yum, yum, say, don't they just smell fine, though?

Look at Ginger walking up and down over by the shore of the lake! He's that near starved he just can't stay around any longer and sniff that delicious odor! Boys, ain't it near time to call us to the fray? Oh, I'm that hollow I'm afraid I'll break in two! ''

'' Supper's ready, Mr. Garrabrant! '' announced Ty Collins, who had been given a free hand as chief cook on this evening, while Elmer paid attention to various other things.

'' Call the boys in then, and we'll see if it tastes as good as it smells. Sound the assembly, Mark,'' called the scout master, himself not at all averse to the pleasant duty of satisfying the inner man's clamorings.

So the bugler sent out the sweet call, and even Ginger seemed to know what it meant, for he came hurrying along to serve the dinner, a broad grin stamped on his ebony face, and his mouth stretched almost from ear to ear.

'' This is what I call solid comfort,'' observed Mark, as he tasted the crisp trout, and decided that it was finer than any fish he had ever eaten in all his life.

A chorus of approving grunts and nods followed his assertion, for as a rule the scouts were too busily occupied just then to say much. Ginger had not been compelled to wait until they were through, under the existing conditions that would have been next door to a crime, because the poor old chap was really frantic for something to stop the awful craving he had. So, after helping the entire bunch he was allowed to dip in and sit in a retired spot, where the tremendous champing noise he made while '' feeding '' might not annoy the rest.

Afterward, when everyone admitted that '' enough was as good as a feast,'' they lay around taking things easy. Ginger gathered up the cooking utensils, and the numerous pannikins and tin cups used by the troop. It was to be

his duty to wash these things after each meal, and thus the boys were enabled to avoid one very troublesome part of camp life. And hence they were glad to have Ginger along.

As before, arrangements were made looking to a constant detail to serve as sentries. There was no danger anticipated, of course, but since the scouts wished to learn everything that was connected with life in the open, they must carry out the game in all its parts. And guarding the camp against a possible foe was one of these things.

Two were to be on duty at the same time, the entire night being suitably divided up into watches, as on board a ship. From ten o'clock up to five meant seven hour shifts, with two boys on duty at a time.

Elmer and Mr. Garrabrant were exempt from this drudgery if they so pleased, but the chances were, both of them would obtain less sleep, that night at least, than any of the others. Even Ginger was given his "spell," though it was doubted whether he could keep awake an hour, for he was a very sleepy individual after he had finished his task with the tin pans.

"To-morrow we start in with some of our tests," remarked the scout master, as the time drew near for the bugler to sound taps. "That's one thing I want to drill you boys in, while we're up here. We'll pit the two details against each other, and see which can set up a tent in the shortest order, and in the best manner. Then we'll start on the first-aid-to-the-injured racket, and take a step further than we've ever gone before. After that I'm going to get our assistant scout master to show us a lot of mighty interesting things about following a trail, and what the different tracks of such animals as may be found up here look like. And another day some of us will hike to the top of that mountain, while another detachment tries to climb the second

rise, after which they can wigwag to each other, in Signal Corps language, and hold a long talk, to be verified later on in camp from the records kept. That is the program, boys. Now, go to your blankets and sleep over it."

They were as a rule a pretty tired lot that lay down. The two sentries had to continue moving about to keep from going to sleep on post, which might be considered a serious offense, and lose them no end of good marks.

Twice did Elmer creep out of his tent, and make the rounds in order to ascertain whether all were going well. The last time was along about two in the morning, and the first thing he heard was a whip-poor-will calling shrilly to its mate not far away.

When he came upon Chatz, who had the outer post, he was surprised to find him exhibiting all the well-known signs by which he was wont to indicate that he had been "seeing things" again. And knowing him so well, Elmer hardly needed to ask what was the matter. Evidently the ghosts that haunted Chatz must have been paying the superstitious Southern boy another visit.

CHAPTER V.

WHAT WAS IT?

"WHAT was it this time, Number Six?" asked the scout leader, as Chatz turned quickly toward him, showing considerable alarm.

"Oh! it's gone now. It just seemed to slide away while I was looking. But I could hear it moving all the same; and I tell you, honest Injun, that it was a dreadful *squashy* sort of sound," and Chatz shrugged his shoulders with what seemed to be a shudder, as he said this.

Elmer hardly knew what to do or to say. Chatz was not above playing a joke, given the opportunity, but this was really a subject on which he felt very deeply, so that it was hard to believe he would be likely to hold it up to scorn.

He seemed to be wide-awake, too, so that there was little chance of its being a dream. Sensible on all other subjects, the superstitious Southern lad had a decided weakness for spooks, and he could imagine uncanny objects prowling around where no one else found the slightest indication of such a thing.

"Where was this?" Elmer asked, cautiously.

"Over there, in that open spot," replied Chatz, cheerfully and without the least sign of hesitation. "You can just make out the deeper shadow of the trees back further. I was looking that way and thinking of something connected with my home when all of a sudden IT loomed up, staring at me in a frightfully ghastly way, and moving its white

body slowly up and down, just like it was warning me of some coming danger."

"Sure it wasn't that owl again, are you?" questioned Elmer, dubiously.

"Couldn't have been any such thing, because," triumphantly went on Chatz, "you see, there ain't a single chance for it to roost on anything! That place is bare! I crossed it several times going for wood yesterday afternoon before dark set in. And then besides—"

"Yes, what else was there?" Elmer asked, encouragingly, for he began to realize that there was at least no fake about the other's upset condition.

"Why, it made the queerest noise you ever heard—just a squashy sound that I'll never be able to forget. Ugh! it was a nasty experience," and he rubbed his eyes with his knuckles, after the manner of one just awakened.

Somehow this gave Elmer an idea.

"Look here, Number Six, are you sure now that you weren't asleep, and just dreaming that something bobbed up in front of you?" he demanded, sternly; for in his capacity as assistant scout master he was given certain privileges which the rest of the boys readily recognized.

"I don't think there's any reason to believe that sort of thing," returned the other, steadily. Fact is, I was never more wide-awake in my life."

"And the thing just stood there, and waved at you, did it?" Elmer continued.

"Oh! I know what you think about it, but when I see a thing I can't deny it, can I? There was something close to me a few minutes ago, something that must have been a spook. If I hadn't had the good sense to stick my hand in my pocket, and grab hold of that blessed old rabbit foot, I honestly believe it would have jumped me! Now laugh again if you want to," defiantly.

But Elmer was himself a bit puzzled. Of course he could not think of allowing himself to dream that what Chatz had seen could be anything unusual. The surrounding conditions invested the most commonplace occurrence with a mysterious atmosphere—that was all, and had it been anyone but Chatz they might have found an easy explanation for the puzzle.

"Well," the scout leader said, finally, "we'll all have to borrow that lucky charm then, when we go on duty, if it's going to scare the spooks away. But your time is up, Number Six, so you can proceed to awaken the scout who follows you."

"I'm glad, and I'm sorry," remarked Chatz. "To tell the truth, I'd like to find out if that pesky thing *could* crop up again. You see, there's no need of being scared about it, so long as you've got something that keeps you from getting hurt."

Evidently the belief of the Southern lad in that magical rabbit's foot was firmly founded, and it would be exceedingly difficult to uproot it. Sneers and scorn would never accomplish that result; in fact such action was apt to only make him cling the more stubbornly to his fetish worship. Elmer believed in going about such things in another manner entirely. Chatz must be shown the error of his ways; and to do that most convincingly the real nature of the object which he believed to be a ghostly visitant from the other world, would have to be proven.

"Wait a minute, Number Six," he said, as the other was about to head toward the tent where part of the Wolf Patrol slept, so he could find and arouse his appointed successor.

"Yes, sir," replied Chatz; for, while Elmer was a chum of his, there were times when he must recognize him only

as a superior officer in the organization to which both belonged, and show him due respect.

"Remember, not a single word to the scout who is to succeed you," Elmer went on.

"Not a word will I breathe, sir, I promise you," replied Chatz, and Elmer knew that nothing would tempt him to betray his trust, for his sense of honor was very high, as it is with all Southern boys.

"Perhaps we might get a pointer on this matter if the strange thing you saw appeared to another," remarked Elmer, thoughtfully.

"Oh! don't I just wish it would," remarked Chatz, eagerly. "Then perhaps the rest of the fellows wouldn't think me cracked in my upper story. And Lil Artha wouldn't be so unfeeling as to say I had rats in my belfry. He's the one who comes on after me. Don't I just wish it would give him a *good* scare, though!"

"Well, go and wake him up, then. I'll let the other sentry know that it's time for a change," and Elmer walked away.

A sudden idea had flashed up in his mind. Could it be possible that there was anything in this wild yarn of Chatz's? Would the second sentry be able to throw any light on the mystery?

He found him squatting on the ground, near a tree, and saw that it was Jasper Merriweather, the timid boy of the troop. At first Elmer had half a suspicion that the other was asleep, for his head was bowed in his hands. At the sound of his step, however, Jasper suddenly looked up with a violent start, and Elmer saw that he was more or less frightened, for he was shivering, even though he had a blanket wrapped around his shoulders.

"Oh! it's you, sir, is it?" he exclaimed. and there was

a positive vein of relief in the tones of his quivering voice that Elmer could not but notice.

"Why, who else did you think it could be, Beaver, Number Four?" asked the assistant scout master, quickly.

"Oh! I don't know," came the rather hesitating reply. "You see I guess Chatz Maxfield has got me all worked up with his silly notions, because I'm seeing things, just like he does, right along. I'm ashamed of myself, that's what."

"Do you mean just now you saw something?" asked Elmer.

"Well," replied Jasper, rising to his feet as he spoke, with returning confidence, "I thought I did, for a fact; and I just hid my head to shut it out, but of course it was only what Mr. Garrabrant calls an optical illusion. There just couldn't be anything there."

"Of course not," the other went on, encouragingly. "H'm, what was it, by the way, you *thought* you saw, Number Four?"

"That's the silly part of it, sir," Jasper answered. "It wasn't anything that I could recognize at all, which proves that I was only imagining things. Plague take Chatz and his ghosts! I never was very brave at my best, but thinking of him has just about queered me. I'm glad you came to talk to me, and show me how foolish it is to let such notions take root."

"But, by the way, where was it you thought you saw this wonderful thing which you say bore no shape that you could describe?" Elmer insisted.

"Oh! let me see, I was sitting just this way, and looking straight out yonder. It was in that open place, sir. I guess the fire must have flashed up suddenly, and dazzled me a bit."

But Elmer noticed that the second sentry pointed in ex-

actly the same quarter where Chatz insisted he had set eyes on the ghost! This would seem to indicate that there must be something in the story.

"Was it a flaming red ghost, Number Four?" he inquired further.

"Why, of course not, sir," chuckled the other. "If it had been I'd have thought it was only Ty Collins in that red sweater he sometimes wears. Oh! no, what I *thought* I saw was a white object. It seemed to be there when I hid my face in my blanket, but when I looked a minute later it was gone."

"Did you hear any sound?" Elmer demanded.

"Well, yes; but after all it may have been one of the fellows snoring," Jasper replied. "But at the time I thought it the queerest sort of noise ever. Might 'a' been a big bulldog jumping into the water. I've heard something like it when I pulled my foot out of a soft oozy piece of mud."

"All right, Number Four. Your time is up, so go and gently arouse your successor. And please don't even whisper a word about this until I give you permission."

"Well, I guess I won't," Jasper quickly mumbled. "Think I'm itching to have the laugh on me? No, siree, I'm as dumb as an oyster," and with that he staggered off toward one of the tents to awaken Nathan Scott.

Elmer returned to his blanket, but he had something on his mind that kept him from enjoying any sound sleep for the remainder of that particular night.

Those two boys had certainly seen *something*, and while, of course, Elmer was too sensible a fellow to allow himself to give the idea of a ghostly visitor the slightest credence, he found himself puzzled to account for it all.

Because of his lying awake so long he slept later than usual in the morning. True, he sprang up when the notes

of the bugle sounded the reveille, but most of the others had been abroad before him.

They took a dip in the lake, though the water was so very cold that none of the scouts cared to remain in more than five minutes. Besides, the almost tragic occurrence of the previous day haunted some of them, and made them a bit timid about venturing into the water, though by degrees this fear would naturally wear off.

While preparations for breakfast were being undertaken by those appointed for this purpose, Elmer strolled out of the camp. He wished to carefully examine the open patch of ground at the point where the two sentries had been so positive the uncanny white object had appeared to them.

Disappointment awaited him there, however. Numerous footprints told how those of the scouts whose duty it was to secure a fresh supply of firewood that morning had passed back and forth directly across this open place. If there had been any suggestive tracks they were surely trampled out of sight by the army of boyish feet that had gone over many times.

Elmer shook his head. He felt that he had been hoodwinked in one sense, but no matter, even this setback must not induce him to give up the task he had set for himself. He owed it to Chatz and his infirmity to discover a reasonable explanation of that ghost theory. And while the solution might be delayed by this unfortunate trampling of the ground, he meant to persist.

"Nothing doing, I guess?" remarked a voice close by, and turning his head the scout leader saw Chatz himself standing there, observing him with a quizzical expression on his dark face.

"Well, if you mean an explanation of the little affair of last night, Chatz, I admit that so far I'm up against it

good and hard. You see, I hoped to find some marks here that would give me a clue, but it's all off. The boys ran after wood and back again so many times, that if there was a trail it's been squashed."

"Oh! I don't think that mattered any," remarked the other, with conviction in his tones. "You can't very well discover what there isn't, can you? And I've always believed that spooks never leave a sign behind them when they come and go. Why, a spook is only a vapor, you know, Elmer. They can slip through a keyhole if necessary. And as to a trail, why, you might as well expect to see that cloud up yonder leave a track behind it."

There could at least be no doubt about Chatz being in dead earnest in his queer belief, and as Elmer turned away he was more than ever determined to find the true solution of that strange happening, if only to drive another nail in the coffin of the Southern boy's superstition.

As neither of the sentries felt at liberty to mention the occurrence until the assistant scout master gave permission, the balance of the scouts ate their breakfast, and joked each other, in blissful ignorance of the fact that the camp had again been visited by a hobgoblin, and that this time not only the superstitious Chatz but another had actually seen the misty intruder!

CHAPTER VI.

THE BOY SCOUTS' WATER BOILING TEST.

Mr. Garrabrant was full of business on this fine morning.

He set about a host of things immediately after breakfast, saying that they ought to take advantage of the opportunity to get in a good morning's work.

Several boys were sent out on the lake to try to duplicate the good luck attending the fishermen of the preceding afternoon. Mark Cummings was encouraged to get numerous views of the camp, and whatever was going on—such as would afford the Hickory Ridge scouts the most pleasure in later days, when this series of camp fires was but a hallowed memory.

With the balance of the troop the scout master proceeded to try out various interesting tests, to discover just how the boys stood in the matter of efficiency. As Elmer was such an old and experienced hand in most of these matters, he was of course debarred from entering the competitions. It would be taking too great an advantage over the tenderfeet scouts, who had everything to learn as yet.

First of all the scout master decided to put ten boys at the boiling-water test. This is one of the most interesting, as well as amusing competitions, the scouts indulge in, and one that never fails to evoke much laughter among those who look on.

Each boy was given a tin pail that held two quarts of water, and which could be carried by a bale. Besides this,

he was handed just three matches, and put upon his honor that he did not have another of the kind upon his person.

A spot was selected that was possibly fully eighty yards away from the edge of the lake, and this Mr. Garrabrant did purposely, so that if one of the competing scouts was so unlucky as to upset his pail of water during the test, he would be greatly handicapped by having to run so far in order to replenish the same.

Lined up, they were to be given the word, when a rush would be made for the lake, the buckets filled at least up to a line midway that indicated a full quart. Then they had to hasten back to the place assigned, being careful not to spill a drop of the fluid on penalty of losing marks for having less than the quart needed.

Wood had to be quickly gathered, and some sort of fireplace constructed where a blaze must be started without the aid of paper. Then the kettles were to be seated on the stones, and the first one that had water actually boiling, as witnessed by the scout master, would be the victor, and the second called "runner-up."

"Ready, all!" called Mr. Garrabrant, and ten eager pair of eyes watched him closely; "go!"

Immediately there was a race for the lake. One clumsy scout fell down and had to scramble to his feet to take his place at the tail end of the procession. Of course the long-legged Lil Artha easily outran all his mates. He had scooped up his water and was on the way back before the next best arrived.

The wise ones made sure to dip up more than they really needed, so as to make allowances for any that might be spilled on the return flight. The surplus could be easily tipped out before they set the kettle on the fire.

When the whole lot had finally reached the open spot where the competition was to be carried out, the picture

was a lively one. Mark was on hand to take a few snapshots, and catch all the humor of the scene.

Now Lil Artha had his fire going, being far in advance of the others. As they hustled to get things moving it was only natural that each fellow cast jealous glances toward those who were getting along faster. In one instance that caused the withdrawal of a competitor, for while paying more attention to what Matty Eggleston was doing than his own business, Larry Billings upset his kettle. After that he gave up with a grunt, for it was the height of folly for him to think of running to the lake for a fresh supply.

Two others used all their three matches and failed to get a fire started, so they also withdrew.

When Arthur Stansbury placed his kettle on his hastily constructed fire-place, long before the rest, it looked as though he had a "walkover."

All at once there arose a shout of boyish glee. In starting to get to his feet, the long-legged one had, as frequently happened, caught his ankles in a hitch, and throwing out one hand to balance he upset the kettle, which came near putting out his fire.

Mr. Garrabrant expected to see him leaping toward the far-off lake in the hope of being yet in the running. To his surprise, Lil Artha snatched up his pail and *ran away from the edge of the water!* Several were so astonished at this that they suspended operations for a second or two to stare after him.

"Oh! I see what he's after, the sly fellow," laughed Elmer. "He remembers the little stream that runs down the side of the hill right there, and reaches the lake. It isn't half as far away as the edge of the big water. Yes, there he comes, with a grin on his face, and a full pail. Good boy, Number Five!"

Once back at his fire, now burning briskly, the tall boy hastened to spill some of the contents of his kettle, and then set the latter firmly on the stones. Nor did he stop there. He had lost some ground, and several had by this time succeeded in catching up with him. So down Arthur lay, full on his stomach, where he could blow his fire, and get it to burning more savagely, after which he fed it with the best small pieces of splintered wood he had been able to pick up.

When a certain number of minutes had elapsed he beckoned to Mr. Garrabrant, who, anticipating the summons, had been hovering nearby. Together with Elmer, the scout master hurried up.

"The water is boiling all right," he announced, "and Number Five wins. But keep going, the balance of you, until we learn who comes in second and third."

Matty Eggleston proved an easy second, while Ted Burgoyne edged in just ahead of Mark, because, as he claimed, his "blowing apparatus worked better."

"But I think we ought to protest that win of Lil Artha," declared Chatz Maxfield, although he had been one of the last in the bunch.

"On what grounds?" asked Mr. Garrabrant, smiling, as though he had expected to hear something of the sort, though hardly from one who had no chance of winning.

"When his kettle upset he didn't go all the way to the lake to fill it again, as he ought to have done," said Red Huggins, who had also the ill fortune to overturn his tin vessel when the water had begun to steam, and who naturally felt a little "sore" as he termed it, because it was too late for him to enter again.

"Listen while I read the terms of the competition again," said Mr. Garrabrant. "I wrote them down so as to be prepared for any event; that's one of our cardinal prin-

ciples, you know, boys. Here it especially states that ' any competitor who upsets his kettle at any time during the test may have the privilege of filling the same again from the nearest water.' "

" Oh! I didn't think of it that way, sir! " exclaimed Red.

" That's just it," smiled the gentleman. " You failed to grasp all there was in that rule, while Arthur analyzed it. He undoubtedly laid his plans beforehand, in which he proved himself a true scout, preparing for eventualities, even though he may not have expected to meet with such an accident. He remembered that little stream, and even the fact that there was a small basin scooped out where a pail could be quickly dipped in and filled. All the more credit to Arthur for his forethought. He doubly deserves the honor he has won, and I congratulate him on his victory. It will be an object lesson to the rest of you. In time of peace prepare for war. And now we will turn our attention to another test. Perhaps some of the rest may excel in that. I want everyone to do his very best, and earn marks that will help to take you out of the tenderfoot class and make second-class scouts."

It was now the turn of Elmer to interest his camp-mates. He had been looking around before this, and laid his plans, so that he was able to lead the entire bunch to a neighboring gully, where in the soft mud alongside a stream he had discovered several distinctly separate sets of animal tracks.

Here he pointed out to them the marked difference between the trail of a muskrat from that of a mink, and even went so far as to tell a number of things which the latter cautious animal had probably done in his passage down the ravine in search of food.

Mr. Garrabrant listened carefully himself, and nodded

approvingly from time to time, to show how much he liked Elmer's way of reasoning.

"You can see, boys," he remarked finally, when the lesson was over for that occasion, "what a vast amount of mighty interesting information can be drawn from so simple a sign as the spoor of a little slender-bodied mink. Elmer has made a study of the animal, and knows his ways to a dot. I think he described all that the mink did on his way along here, just as it actually occurred. And the deeper one dips into such woods' lore, the more fascinating it is found. All around you are dozens of things that strike the educated eye as deeply interesting and worthy of study, but which would never be seen by the tenderfoot. And it is this power of observation that we wish our boy scouts to employ constantly. Once the fever takes hold, a new life opens up for the lover of Nature."

After that they busied themselves around the camp doing various things until lunch time. About the middle of the afternoon three relays, of two boys each, were sent out in as many different directions. They were not to take paper or pencil along, but simply to try to impress various interesting things they happened to meet with, upon their memories, and after they had returned to camp they would be given a chance to note these down on paper. The one of each pair who could excel in his description as to the number and interest of the things seen, would receive merit marks. And later on the three victors might be pitted against each other again.

While the six boys were absent, for they had a couple of hours in which to accomplish their end, those left in camp found plenty to do. Mark spent some time in developing the films he had exposed thus far, having a daylight developing bath along with him. In this way he could find a possible chance to duplicate any pictures that,

for some unknown cause, failed to do justice to the subject. If he waited until they returned home to get to work, the chances would have gone forever.

Everybody seemed happy but Ted Burgoyne, and he went about with an expression of gloom on his face that of course may have been assumed.

"Didn't think you took it to heart so, Ted," remarked Elmer, as he confronted the other, while the rest of the stay-at-homes were busily debating some question near the camp fire.

"Oh!" exclaimed the scowling one, disconsolately; "it ain't about losing my chance in that blooming old competition, by falling all over mythelf in the thtart! Oh! no, that doethn't bother me one little bit, becauth you thee, I just knew I had no chance against thuch a hustler as Lil Artha."

"Then your breakfast must have disagreed with you," persisted Elmer, "though it's the first time I ever knew you had a weak stomach, Ted."

"You're away off again, partner," grumbled Ted. "Fact ith, to tell the honest truth now, like every good scout ought to do, you're all too plagued healthy a bunch to thuit me, that'th what."

"What's that—healthy?" remarked Elmer, and then a faint grin began to creep over his face, as he caught on to the meaning of the words. "Oh! I see now; your heart's just set on doing good to others, ain't it? You dream of binding up cuts, and putting soothing liniment on bruises. And so far, not one of the boys has had the kindness to fall down the rocks, cut himself with the ax, or even get such a silly thing as a headache. It's a shame, that's what it is, Ted!"

"Well, you can poke fun all you want," grumbled the would-be surgeon, with an obstinate shake of his head,

" but after a fellowth gone to all the trouble to lay in a thtock of medicine, and studied up on cuts and bruises and all thuch things till he just feels bristling all over with valuable knowledge, it 'th mean of the fellowth to take thuch good care of their precious fingers and toes. What d'ye suppose I'm going to do for a thubject, if this awful drought keepth on? Why, I don't believe fourteen wild boys ever kept together tho long before, without lots of things happening that would be just pie for a fellow of my build. Now—"

But the lamentations of poor Dr. Ted were interrupted at this point, so Elmer never really knew just how far the matter went, or if after all it were a joke.

Toby Jones had sprang to his feet, showing the utmost excitement, and dancing around as though he had suddenly sat upon a wasp's nest.

" What ails the fellow? " remarked Elmer; " he seems to be pointing up at the top of the mountain, as if he saw something there. Well, I declare, if that doesn't just beat the Dutch now; and to think that it was Toby, the boy who is wild over aviation, who first discovered it "; and meanwhile Toby had found his voice to shriek: " A balloon! look at the balloon, would you, fellows? And she's coming right down here into my hungry arms! Oh! glory! such great luck! "

CHAPTER VII.

THE LOST SKY TRAVELER.

Half a dozen boys started to cry out at once, as they stared at the great bulky object that was apparently settling down, after passing around a spur of the mountain above.

"She's coming right at us, fellows!" shouted one.

"Ain't that a pilot hanging to the old basket?" demanded a second.

"Nixy it ain't, Jasper. Go get your glasses, so you can see better. That basket is plumb empty, and that's a fact. The bally old balloon's deserted, boys!" Lil Artha declared, and as he was known to have particularly trustworthy vision, the balance of the group accepted his word as the right thing.

Apparently the balloon had been steadily losing gas of late, for the enormous bag had a collapsed look. It seemed to have gotten into some circular current of air, once beyond the mountain, for it kept moving around in spirals, all the time dropping slowly but positively. So that unless a new breeze caught it, the chance seemed to be that it would actually alight on the shore of the lake, close to the camp.

"Get ready to man the boats if it falls in the lake, boys!" called Mr. Garrabrant, who recognized the fact that such a balloon must be worth considerable to his little troop in the way of salvage, and was determined to do what he could to save it from sinking out of sight.

But in the end it managed to drop on the pebbly beach. The very first to touch the collapsed gas bag was the exuberant Toby Jones, wild with delight over this remarkable happening that had come to him.

"I claim it by right of discovery, and the first to lay a hand on the balloon!" he shouted, as he fondly ran his fingers along the strong material of which the air vessel was constructed.

"Where on earth could it have come from?" more than one of the boys asked, as they surveyed the immense girth of silken cloth with wondering eyes.

"There's a circus over at Warrendale," announced Ted. "Perhaps she broke away from there in a wind storm, or else bucked the aviators out. Whew! think of tumbling down hundreds of feet! Guess I couldn't 'a' been of much use around there, if that's what happened to the air navigators; the more the pity," and Ted actually looked discontented, as though another golden opportunity had slipped past him.

"Sounds like a good guess, Ted," remarked Elmer; "but there happen to be several things to knock it silly."

"As what?" demanded the boy with the long legs, who always wanted to be shown.

"For instance, you know where Warrendale lies, off to the east from here," the scout leader explained, in the most accommodating way possible, "while this thing must have come from the west! You saw it sail over the mountain up there, and we've been having constant west winds for several days now. Isn't that so, Mr. Garrabrant?"

"Every word of it, Elmer," replied the gentleman, who was never happier than when listening to this wide-awake scout substantiating his claim.

"And besides, here's a name sewed to the balloon—*Republic!* Seems to me, sir, I've seen that name before. Un-

less I'm away off it was one of the big gas bags entered for that long-distance endurance race, which was to come off away out in St. Louis. or somewhere along the Mississippi River."

"Oh! my, just to think of it, fellows!" gasped Toby, his face fairly aglow with overwhelming delight, while he continued to fondle the material of which the collapsible balloon was constructed, as though he might be almost worshiping the same.

"Why, that's hundreds and hundreds of miles away!" declared another incredulous one.

"Don't seem possible, does it, that a balloon could sail that far?" a third had the temerity to remark, when Toby turned upon him instantly, saying:

"Say, you don't read the papers, do you? If you did you'd know that in a drifting race a balloon went all the way without touching ground from St. Louis up into New England, while another passed over into Canada away up above Quebec, and won the race. Others fell near Baltimore, and such places. There can't be any doubt about it, boys, this wanderer has drifted all the way from the old Mississippi. But whatever could have become of her crew?"

The thought saddened them for the time being, but it was difficult for Toby to subdue the excitement under which he was laboring.

"Oh! if I only knew how to manufacture gas so as to fill her up again, mebbe I wouldn't like to take a spin, and surprise the Hickory Ridge people, though! Think how my dad's eyes would bulge out, fellows, when I landed right in his dooryard, and asked how ma was? Ted, you know lots of things—can't you tell me how to make hot air?"

Ted did not answer, only grinned and looked toward

Lil Artha so very suggestively that the rest burst out into a howl, for the long-legged boy was known to be something of an orator, who could speak for half an hour if warmed up to his subject.

"None for sale!" remarked that individual, promptly, whereat Toby pretended to be grievously disappointed, for he gave the tall boy a look of scorn, saying:

"There he goes again, fellows; declining to make a martyr of himself for the sake of science. Why, I even heard Dr. Ted offering to sew on his finger again so neat that no one could tell where it had been separated, and would you believe it, Lil Artha was mean enough to abjectly decline? But I'm going to think over it, and if I can only fill this big bag with gas I'll leave camp on a little foraging expedition, to bring back more grub. For Ginger is eating us out of house and home, ain't he, Mr. Garrabrant?"

So they laughed and joked as they continued to gather around the balloon that had seemingly dropped from the skies. Elmer alone was thoughtful. He could not but wonder what the story connected with the *Republic* might be. Had the brave pilot and his assistant been thrown out in some storm which they were endeavoring to ride out? If that proved true, then the history of the fallen balloon must be a tragic one.

Under the direction of the scout master they dragged the tremendous bag, now emptied of its gaseous contents, and piled it up close to the camp. When the time came for the return trip possibly they might find some means for transporting the balloon to the home town, and when the fact of its discovery was published in the great New York dailies, the name of Hickory Ridge would become famous.

This new event afforded plenty of topics for conversation. As usual the boys argued the matter pro and con. They

even took sides, and debated with considerable heat the various phases of the happening.

Some of them got out paper and pencil to figure just how many hours it might take a balloon to come all the way from St. Louis for instance, granting that a westerly breeze prevailed. All sorts of ideas prevailed as to the number of miles an hour the wind had blown, ranging from five to fifty.

In the end, after all theories had been ventilated, the boys were no nearer a solution of the mystery than before, only it seemed now to be the consensus of opinion that the *Republic* must have been entered in some race, and possibly away out on the bank of the mighty river that divides our republic almost in half.

"About time some of our strollers turned up, I should think," remarked Mr. Garrabrant, as he and Elmer sat in front of the tents, listening to the jabbering of the disputants, though all the argument was carried on in good temper.

"Speak of an angel, and you hear its wings," laughed the scout leader, as a shrill halloo came from the woods close by.

Two of the boys who had gone forth to observe such things as they came across, presently appeared in camp. They looked tired and hungry, and began to sniff the appetizing odors that were beginning to permeate the camp, for several messes of beans were cooking, and Ginger was employed in preparing a heap of big onions for a grand fry that would just about fill the bill, most of the boys thought.

But while the incidents accompanying their long walk and climb were still fresh in their memories they were made to sit down alone, and write a list of those things they could recall, and which had impressed them most of all.

Presently two more weary pilgrims came in sight, limping along, and only too glad to get back safe and sound. Ted kept an eager watch and tally as they made their appearance. His face was seen to drop several degrees when, in answer to the solicitous inquiries of the scout master, they reported no accidents, and all sound.

"There goeth another golden opportunity!" Ted exclaimed, shaking his head in real or assumed disgust. "I never thaw thuch ungrateful fellers in all my life. Why, it begins to look like *nobody* would even get a finger theratched. I expect after all I'll just have to get Tom Cropthey to let me pull that tooth of hith that aches like thixty. I hate to come down to it, but thomething's got to be done to thave the country!"

"It don't hurt now, I tell you," remonstrated Tom. "You needn't go to coaxin' me any more, because I tell you right off that I ain't meanin' to have it out when it acts decent like. Wait till she gets me goin' again, anyhow. And that's straight off the reel, take it or leave it."

The second couple were likewise settled off, each fellow by himself, and the balance of the troop ordered not to disturb the train of their thoughts until both had jotted down the smallest item that they had noticed. In the end the papers would be read aloud, and many interesting things be disclosed, showing what a fund of knowledge there lies all around one at any time, if only he chooses to take notice of the same.

"That leaves only Red and Larry to be heard from," remarked Mr. Garrabrant, who believed he had great reason to congratulate himself, as well as his boys, on the fact that thus far so little had happened to cause trouble, no matter how much the ambitious, and only too willing, doctor-surgeon might bewail his hard luck.

"They ought to be coming soon, sir, because it won't be

long before dusk now. And I don't think either of those boys would care to be lost up here after nightfall," Elmer observed, listening as though he fancied he had caught some suggestive sound up the steep slope, that might betray the coming of the last pair.

"I wonder did any of the others happen to see them?" said the scout master. "Here comes the first couple, having finished their task. This way, boys, please; I want to ask if either of you in the course of your wanderings happened to run across Oscar Huggins and Larry Billings? They are the only missing scouts, and as the hour is growing late, I would like to get a point as to where they may be."

Neither of the returned ones, however, could give him the least information, nor was he able to succeed any better when he asked the other couple. Apparently the absent pair must have taken a course entirely different from any of their comrades.

The twilight now began to gather under the shelter of the high mountain, and Mr. Garrabrant looked a bit worried. If the boys had been unfortunate enough as to lose themselves, he knew that they had taken plenty of matches along, and moreover they had been instructed in various devices whereby they might communicate with their comrades, by waving a burning torch, for instance, from some high elevation, certain movements standing for letters in the Morse code, as used by the Signal Corps of the army.

"I think I hear voices up yonder, sir," remarked Elmer, coming up behind the scout master, who was watching the finishing preparations for supper that were going on at the several fires.

"Yes, I thought so myself, and what you say, Elmer, makes me more positive," Mr. Garrabrant observed, a smile taking the place of the grave look on his handsome face.

"Yes, there they come yonder, looking as tired as the others. And it may be that I deceive myself, but it strikes me both lads seem to be greatly excited over something or other. I sincerely hope nothing has happened to injure them. I notice no limp in their gait, and each seems to have the full use of both arms. What can have happened to them now?"

"At any rate we'll soon know, sir, for here they are," said Elmer, encouragingly, as Red and Larry limped up to the camp, and with sundry grunts sank upon a log as if to signify how utterly exhausted they might be.

"But tired or not, sir, we're just ready to go out again with you, after we've had some supper," declared Red, to the utter wonderment of the clustering scouts.

"Then I was right in my surmise, and you *have* run across something out of the common, boys?" remarked Mr. Garrabrant.

"Yes, sir," Red promptly replied, "we certainly have; and many times we felt mad to think we came away to get help instead of staying there, and trying ourselves to investigate, so as to find out what the groans meant we heard coming from that lonely hut!"

CHAPTER VIII.

A BLAZED TRAIL.

THERE was a chorus of exclamations from the gathered scouts, when they heard Red express himself in this startling way. Eyes grew round with wonder, and more than one lad almost held his breath, as he waited to catch further particulars of the strange happening that had befallen their two chums during their tramp.

"Where was this at, Oscar?" asked the scout master, quickly, alive to the importance of ascertaining all there was to be made known.

"I think it must have been all of a mile and a half from here, sir," returned Red, who seldom heard his real name mentioned save in school or at home.

"And the way is mighty rough, too, sir," Larry put in, rubbing his chin as if it might pain him somewhat, which action caused Ted to grin, and nod his head.

"Thee you later, Larry," he muttered. "I bet you now, I don't let thith chance get away from me. That boy'th badly hurt, and just won't acknowledge it, but wait till Dr. Ted geth hold of him, that'th what."

"Do you think you can lead us back there, in case we make up our minds to go to-night after supper?" Mr. Garrabrant continued.

"Easy, sir," came the answer, in confident tones. "You see, we made it a point to mark the trail as we came along, by cutting the trunks of trees, and breaking branches so as to catch the eye. Elmer was telling us lately how he did

once when lost in the timber in Canada, the 'bush' he called it, and we remembered."

"That's just fine, Oscar," commented the scout master, as though pleased at so great a show of forethought in two of his charges. "It shows what this business is already doing for all of you—teaching you to use your heads at any and all times. That was well done, and I imagine we'll have little or no difficulty in tracing your progress back, even if you are too tired to accompany us, for we will have Elmer along."

"Oh! but I'm bound to go, if I have to drag my game leg behind me," asserted Red. "You see, both of us feel sore over coming away without trying longer to find out what it was groaning so in that cabin, and we want to make good."

"Does it hurt you *very* much, Red?" asked the solicitous Ted, coming up with a face that seemed marked with feeling.

"Sure it does, Ted," replied the other, promptly, "and I'm going to ask you to rub some liniment on right away. Reckon I just sprained it a little, slipping down the side of the mountain."

"Good for you, Red!" ejaculated the pleased amateur surgeon, as he clasped the other by the arm. "Come right along with me, and I'll fix you up in a jiffy. Only too glad to be of thervice. And Red, you're the only gentleman—" he suddenly paused, gave one smiling look around at the frowning faces of his mates, and then completed his sentence: "who hath applied to me for treatment. I'll never forget this kindneth, never!"

"Hold on!" remarked the scout master. "We must know a little more about this matter before you drag your patient away; though of course we expect him to survive

the treatment. Tell us about the lone cabin, Oscar. How did you happen on it? ''

'' We had turned,'' Red started to say, '' and were heading toward home, when all of a sudden I thought I heard a plain human groan. Larry said he had caught some sort of sound, too. So we began to advance in that direction, going slow-like, because you see we didn't know what sort of trickery we might be up against. Then we caught sight of a cabin that was half hidden among the trees and bushes.''

'' Ugh! '' Larry broke in with, '' it just gave us both the creeps, sir, to see how awful lonely the old place looked, run down and neglected like. If Chatz had been along, he'd sure have believed his pet ghost lived there.''

'' But surely two sensible chaps like you and Oscar wouldn't think of such a thing as that? '' remarked Mr. Garrabrant.

'' Oh! no, sir,'' replied Red, after shooting a swift look toward his comrade in misery. '' But you see, the groans kept on acomin' out of that window, and we could hear voices too. We didn't hardly now what to do, go on and knock at the door, or hurry back here to report. Larry, he gave me a cold chill, I admit sir, when he just accidentally said that it might be a case of smallpox in that hut—you know there were some cases this last spring to the north of the Ridge.''

'' And after talking it over, you decided that the wisest thing to be done was to make your way to camp, and throw the responsibility on my shoulders? '' said the scout master. '' Well, perhaps it was far better you did this than take chances. I have no doubt but what you might have adopted a different course if you had not had help near by.''

'' Yes, sir, that's just what I said to Larry—that you'd know best what ought to be done; but that if we were all

alone in the region, we'd just have to go up to the door and knock."

"And so you set out to reach camp as fast as you could?" continued Mr. Garrabrant.

"That's what we did sir, and in such a hurry that several times we slipped and barked our shins, while I got a jar when I tumbled."

"Oh! I'll fix that all right, in three thhakes of a lam'th tail, if you'll only come over to my tent," said Ted, tugging at the arm of each returned wanderer.

And unable to resist his urgent plea, they allowed him to lead them away. Later on when they once more appeared, as supper was announced by the assembly call, the pair of wounded scouts admitted that Dr. Ted had indeed done wonders, inasmuch that their pains had miraculously vanished, and they felt able to undertake the rough journey again—after they had broken their fast.

There was much speculation during the meal as to whom Mr. Garrabrant would select to accompany him on his trip. Of course Elmer was a foregone conclusion, as his natural ability along the line of following a blazed trail might come in pat.

But the scout master settled all doubts by announcing toward the close of the meal that he wished Red, Elmer, Arthur, Dr. Ted (in case his services were needed) Jack Armitage and Ty Collins to accompany him.

No one murmured, for they knew it would do no good. Larry started to ask why he had been left out; but Mr. Garrabrant had noted his pallor, and understood that he did not possess the sturdy physique his comrade of the tramp boasted, and on that account had better remain in camp.

Another thing some of the observing lads noticed, and this was the fact that as a rule those selected, outside of

Dr. Ted, were the strongest in the troop. Perhaps, then, Mr. Garrabrant might anticipate trouble of some sort, and wished to have a healthy band of scouts at his back, especially since none of them carried arms of any kind—though the scout master really did have a revolver secreted in his bag, which, unseen by any of the boys, he now made sure to hide on his person.

There could be no telling what they might find themselves up against. Rumor had it that certain hard characters at one time made their headquarters somewhere up in the woods around the lakes, and who could say that the lone cabin might not prove to be a nest of yeggmen or hoboes?

"How does your thprain feel; think you can thtand it?" asked Ted of Red, as they got up from around the fire and prepared to sally forth on their mission of mercy.

"If you hadn't reminded me of it just then, I'd sure never have thought I had a game leg," remarked the other. "You're all to the good when it comes to doctoring a fellow, Ted; if only you wouldn't talk so much about sawing off legs and all such awful things."

"Well, I'll be along in case you feel it again, and I'll make thure to carry a tin of that magic liniment," remarked the ambitious surgeon, as he reëntered the tent, to make up a little package of things he thought might come in handy in case they found some one sick in the hut.

Meanwhile, acting on the suggestion of Elmer, the other boys selected such stout canes and cudgels as lay around camp.

"Be prepared!" grinned Lil Artha, as he swung a particularly dangerous looking club around his head until it fairly whistled through the air. "That's the motto of the Boy Scouts, and I reckon it applies in a case of this kind,

just as much as when stopping a runaway horse. I'm prepared to give a good account of myself, that's dead certain."

Mr. Garrabrant had fetched out a couple of lanterns, making sure that the oil receptacles were well filled, so that they would last through the journey, going and returning.

"Now we're off, boys," he remarked, with a pleasant smile. "The rest of you stay here and look close after the camp. I've appointed Mark Cummings to serve in my place while I'm gone, and shall expect every scout to pay him just as much respect as though I were present. Lead off, Oscar, we're with you."

Red took up his place at the head of the little bunch. He carried one of the lanterns with which he cast sufficient light ahead to see where he was going.

"First to take you to the seven sentry chestnuts," he said. "We named 'em that, of course, when we came on 'em. The blazed trail commences right there, sir. We didn't think it worth while to do any more slicing of bark after that, because we knew we could easy enough find our way back to that place."

And he did lead the party to the seven chestnuts, with only one or two periods of hesitation, during which he had to puzzle things out.

"There's the first blaze on that oak yonder," he remarked, pointing as he spoke. "We tried to make the marks close enough so as to show by lantern light, because we both had an idea you'd want to come on before morning, sir."

Elmer was at the side of the leader by this time, prepared to lend his experience in case the other ran up against a snag. He took especial note of the general direction in which the numerous blazes seemed to run. And when presenty Red confessed that he was "stumped" if he could see where the next mark ought to be, Elmer had them hold

up while he walked forward in the quarter where, on general principles, he imagined the blaze should be. And in another minute his soft "cooee" told his comrades that he had, sure enough, found the missing mark.

Many times did Red have to fall back on Elmer to help him out. His blazes had apparently been further apart than he had realized at the time he made them. But the boy who had lived in Canada, and experienced all sorts of frontier life, knew just how to go about making the needed discovery; and in every instance success rewarded his efforts.

"We're getting close to the place now," Red finally announced, as he limped along, refusing to allow Ted the privilege of rubbing his strained leg again, because he did not want to waste the time.

"Then you recognize some of the landmarks?" suggested Mr. Garrabrant.

"Yes, sir, I do that," came the confident reply. "In another five minutes I think we'll be able to see something of that queer cabin that is half hidden in the dense undergrowth."

"Perhaps less than five minutes," remarked Elmer, quietly. "Look yonder, sir, and you'll just catch a glimpse of what seems to be a tiny speck of light. I think that must spring from the window of the hut Red speaks of."

"You are right again, Elmer, as always," replied the scout master, drawing in a long breath. "Now, forward, slowly, boys. Let no one stumble, if it can possibly be avoided; for we do not know what we may be up against. But if there is anyone suffering in that cabin, it is our duty to investigate, no matter what the danger. Elmer, lead the way with me, please."

Cautiously they crept forward, foot by foot. Doubtless many a heart beat faster than ordinary, because there was

a certain air of mystery hovering over the whole affair, and they could imagine a dozen separate strange sights that might meet their vision once they peeped into the little window of that isolated cabin.

But no one would ever confess that such a thing as fear tugged at the strings of his heart. Already the discipline they had been under since joining the scout movement was bearing fruit; timidity was put aside with a stern hand, and keeping in a bunch they advanced until presently those in the lead were able to rise up from hands and knees, glueing their eager eyes upon the little opening through which came the light that had guided them to the spot.

And right then and there they heard a groan, so full of suffering and misery that it went straight to the heart of every boy who had been drafted by the scout master to accompany him on this strange night errand.

CHAPTER IX.

WHAT THE LONE CABIN CONTAINED.

When Elmer Chenowith looked through that opening, what he saw was so entirely different from what he had anticipated discovering that he could hardly believe his eyes at first.

With all the fancy of a boy, who gives free rein to his imagination, doubtless he had fully expected to discover several gruff-looking hoboes gathered there, perhaps engaged in torturing one of their kind, or some wretched party who had fallen into their power.

Nothing of the sort. The very first object Elmer saw was a small boy, dressed in ragged clothes, and who was trying to blow a dying fire into life again.

This did not look very alarming; and so Elmer cast his eyes further afield, with the result that presently another moving object riveted his attention. Why, surely that must be a girl, for her long hair seemed to indicate as much! What was she bending over? Was that a rude cot?

Then the strange truth burst upon Elmer like a cannon shot. The groans—they must indicate that a sick person lay there, and these two small children (for the boy could not be over six, while the girl might be eight) were trying to carry out the combined duties of nurse, doctor and cook!

"Oh!"

It was Red himself who gave utterance to this low exclamation. He was peering in at the opening over the shoulder of Mr. Garrabrant, and what he saw was so vastly

different from his expectations that he received a severe "jolt," as he himself afterwards expressed it.

Perhaps the sound, low as it was, reached the ears of the little girl guardian of the sick bed. They saw her give a jump, and immediately a pair of startled blue eyes were staring in the direction of the opening.

"Come!" said Mr. Garrabrant to his boys, "there is no need of any more secrecy. I think we are needed here, and badly, too."

He led the way around the corner of the lone lodge, with the scouts tagging at his heels, only too willing to follow. Reaching the door of the cabin they were about to enter, when Mr. Garrabrant uttered an exclamation of alarm.

"Get on to the girl, would you?" gasped Lil Artha; and there was no need of his attempting to explain, since his chums could see for themselves.

Small though she was, the girl had snatched up a long-barreled gun, and was now actually menacing the intruders. Her white face had a desperate look upon it, as though at some time in the past the child had been warned that there were bad men to be met with in those woods. As for the little chap, he had hold of the hatchet with which at the time he must have been cutting kindling wood; for he clutched it in his puny hand, and looked like a dwarfed wildcat at bay.

Elmer, as long as he lived, would never forget that picture. And as for the other boys, not one of them could so much as utter a single word.

"Hold on, my child!" cried Mr. Garrabrant, raising his hands to show that they did not hold any sort of weapon; "we are friends, and would be only too glad to be of help to you. One of us is something of a doctor, if it happens that anyone is sick here. Please let us come in."

Perhaps it was the kindly look of the handsome young

scout master—then again his voice may have influenced the frightened girl; or the fact that those in the open doorway were mostly boys might have had considerable to do with it. Then again that magical word "doctor" must have thrilled her through and through.

The gun fell to the floor, and the relieved girl burst into a flood of tears.

"It's dad!" she cried, moving a hand toward the rude cot behind her; and as the eyes of the boys flitted thither again, they saw a bearded and very sick looking man trying to raise himself up on his elbow.

Mr. Garrabrant immediately went toward him, uttering reassuring words, that no doubt did much to relieve the alarm of the occupant of the rude bed. Wisely had the long-headed scout master caused one of the boys to carry some food along, not knowing what necessity might arise. He saw that hunger was holding sway in this lone cabin as well as sickness. And while Red started the fire to going, Ty Collins proceeded to unwrap the package of meat and bread, as well as the coffee and tea he had "toted" all the way from camp.

Mr. Garrabrant with a few questions learned the simple story. The man was a charcoal burner in the summer season, while he pursued the arduous labor of a lumberman in the winter. A few months before his wife had suddenly died, leaving him with these two small but very independent children.

Abe Morris, his name was, while the boy carried that of Felix; and whenever the cabin dweller spoke of the girl it was always as "Little Lou." He had hated to leave the retired home where he had spent so many pleasant years, and near which his wife was buried. And so he had managed to get along, with the girl cooking his meals and playing the part of housekeeper wonderfully well; while even

Felix could do his stunt of gathering firewood and looking after a few simple traps in which he caught muskrats.

When the boys heard that this small edition of a lad had been able to actually outwit the shrewd animals of the marsh, they looked at each other in dismay, as though wondering whether he might not have a better right to the title of scout that any among them.

Things had gone fairly well with the widower until a week back, when an accident had brought him almost to death's door. Managing to drag himself home, he had swooned from loss of blood. Since that time he had suffered tortures, more of the mind than of the body, since he dreaded the thought of what would become of his children should death claim him.

They had done wonderfully well. When Dr. Ted got busy, he praised the simple but clever work of that eight-year-old girl, in binding up such a severe wound. Perhaps Little Lou may have learned how to do this from the mother who was gone, or it might be it came just natural to her. When children live away from the world, and are forced to depend upon themselves for everything, it is amazing how they can do things that would puzzle those twice their age, when pampered in comfortable homes. Necessity forces them to reach out and attempt things, just as she teaches the child to use its limbs, and utter sounds.

Once they realized that these were kind friends who had come so opportunely to their rescue, Felix and Little Lou found their voices, and proved that they could talk, as Lil Artha put it, " a blue streak."

And when they sat down to a supper such as they had not tasted for many a day, both of the children of the charcoal burner were comparatively happy. As for the man himself, he wrung the hands of Mr. Garrabrant and each

of the Boy Scouts as they took their leave, calling down blessings on their heads for what they had done.

"We're going to see you through, Abe," the scout master had said positively. "We intend being up here ten days or so, and during that time I fully expect our Dr. Ted will be able to have you hobbling around again. Then you've got to come down to Hickory Ridge when we send a vehicle of some sort up here for you. This is no place for a man to think of bringing up two such fine youngsters as you possess. They must have a chance to go to school, and I promise you all the work you want, so that you can live in or near town. It may have been different so long as your good wife was with you, but now it would be next door to a crime to think of staying here, even for the balance of the summer. You will come, won't you?"

"Sure I will, Mr. Garrabrant!" exclaimed the rough man; who, however, used better language than might have been expected. "And it's the luckiest day of my whole life when those two lads discovered my shack here. Heaven only knows what would have become of us only for that."

They left the queer home in the wilderness with Felix and Little Lou waving their hands vigorously after them, standing in the doorway, and plainly seen against the firelight behind.

And there was not one among those boys but who felt a warm sensation in the region of his heart, such as always comes when a kind deed has been performed.

Mr. Garrabrant had been greatly affected by the incident; nor did he hesitate to express himself warmly on the journey back to the camp, which by the way Elmer managed to accomplish without even one error of judgment, much to the admiration of his chums, who watched his actions eagerly, desirous of picking up points calculated to enhance their reputation as scouts.

"Boys, you may have made other tramps, going skating, hunting, playing baseball, and the like; but take my word for it, you never acquitted yourselves better than on this night. I'm proud of every one of you, and I thank you in the name of poor Abe Morris. And if there happens to be anyone here who has been wearing his badge upside down through the day, because he failed to find a chance to do anybody a good turn, I hereby give him full permission to set it right."

"Hurrah! that touches me, sir!" exclaimed Jack Armitage. "I've been wondering all along just how in the wide world I was going to find a chance to do my little kind deed stunt. There ain't any old ladies to help across the street up here; and dooryards to clear up of trash are as scarce as hens' teeth. But you've eased my mind a heap, Mr. Garrabrant. Perhaps you'll let me do some of the running over to Abe's cabin each day, to carry him supplies. That sturdy little chap just took my eye, and when I get back home I'm going to get father to give Abe a job in his flooring mill."

"That's nice of you, Jack," replied the pleased scout master. "And it does your heart credit. Between us all, it will be very strange if we can't fix up that little family, and bring some happiness to their bleak home. Think of those two brave kiddies keeping house for their father amid such desolate surroundings. No wonder they made me think of a pair of wildcats ready to defend their den as we bustled in. They seldom see a living soul but their father, now that the mother has been laid away. But we must be nearly back at camp, I should judge, Elmer? At any rate, I admit that I'm beginning to feel leg weary, not being used to this work of tramping over the side of a rough mountain."

"But just think of Red, here, thir," broke in Dr. Ted, who had a helping arm around the lame member of the expedition. He thure detherves a medal for what he's done.

Tramping all thith distance with that thore ankle ith—well, I wath going to thay heroic, but I guess he wouldn't like that. Anyhow, I think pretty much all the credit ought to go to Red."

"Now, just you hold your horses there!" declared the party in question, trying to repress a groan, as he had a rude twinge of pain shoot up his left leg. "I owe all this to myself, and more, because I made the mistake of running off without finding out what that groan meant. I've wanted to kick myself ever since. It ain't often I play the part of a sneak, and it makes me sore. So whenever my leg hurts I just grin and say to myself: "Serves you right, you coward, for running away, instead of investigating, like a true scout should have done!'"

"You are too severe on yourself, Oscar," remarked Mr. Garrabrant, soothingly; for he knew the impulsive and warm-hearted nature of the boy who was taking himself so much to task. "When your companion suggested that perhaps there was a case of smallpox in that hut, it was your duty to come to me and report, rather than take the awful responsibility on your young shoulders. And I mean to see to it that you get many good marks for what you have done this night—not you alone, but every boy who accompanied me on this errand of mercy."

"There's the camp fire, sir!" exclaimed Elmer, at this moment.

"I bet you Redth glad to see it, poor old chap!" remarked Dr. Ted.

"Shucks! I reckon I could have stood it a little while longer!" declared the limping one; but when he presently reached the home camp, and sank down on a blanket, the pain he had been silently enduring all the return trip was too much for him, and Red actually fainted.

Of course he was quickly brought to, and Dr. Ted looked to the injured limb.

"You'll have to lie around pretty much all the balance of the time we're run up in thith neck of the woodth, old fellow," was his announcement; which dictum made Red do what the pain had failed to accomplish, groan dismally.

Of course those who had been left behind were fairly clamorous to know what had happened. So sitting there by the crackling fire, with all those bright and eager faces surrounding him, the scout master, assisted at times by Elmer, Ted or Lil Artha, described their long jaunt over the grim mountainside, the finding of the lone cabin, just as Red and Larry had said, and what wonderful discovery they had made upon peering in through the open window.

And every boy felt that a golden opportunity had come to their organization that night to live up to the high ideals the Boy Scout movement stands for.

CHAPTER X.

WIGWAGGING FROM THE MOUNTAIN PEAK.

"ANOTHER fine day for a few more tests, and such things, fellows!" sang out Chatz Maxfield, on the following morning, after they had finished breakfast.

The night had actually passed without any sign of alarm. Although Chatz had fully anticipated a return of his stalking ghost, while he stood out his turn as a sentry, he had met with disappointment, for nothing happened. Still, he did not wholly give up hope of meeting up with the "misty white object" again. The jeers of his mates had begun to take effect, and Chatz really wanted to have the thing settled, one way or the other, as soon as possible. Either there were such things as ghosts, or there were not. And he wished to be convinced, declaring that he was open to conviction, if only they could prove to the contrary.

"Yes," remarked Mark Cummings, who was near by, with others of the scouts; "and I guess Mr. Garrabrant has laid out a bully and strenuous old day for the lot of us, barring Red and Ginger, who are to keep camp. He speaks of sending one bunch to the top of Mount Pisgah, as this peak is called, while another tries to climb Mount Horab yonder. They ought to get up there about noon, and for two hours wigwag to each other, sending and receiving messages that are to be kept in books provided for the purpose. Then, at night, when we all meet again around the camp fire, we'll have heaps of fun, seeing just how stupid we've been in our Signal Corps work."

"Don't you forget, Mark," said Red, who was lounging on a log close by, "that you promised to let me try a few prints from those negatives you developed and fixed. I'm a pretty good hand at that work, so they tell me at home, and I'd like to see how we all look up here in camp."

"All right, Red," replied Mark, cheerfully. "You shall do the job, and welcome. I've seen some of your work, and it's sure the best ever. I'll fix up a place in the tent here, where you can hobble if you want to, after you've done your printing and want to fix the pictures."

"But you want to go easy on that leg, remember," warned Dr. Ted, shaking a finger at his patient, just as he had seen the old family doctor do many a time.

"You and Jack are bound over the side of the mountain to visit the Abe Morris family, I hear?" remarked Chatz, speaking to Ted.

"Yeth, it is a professional visit on my part," replied the other, pretending to look very dignified. "But Mr. Garrabrant hath promithed that everyone of you shall have a turn to accompany me day by day, tho ath to make the acquaintance of those two brave kiddies, as he calls them, Felix and Little Lou."

"I'm right glad to hear that, suh," remarked Chatz; "from what you all tell me, I'm quite anxious to meet up with that boy and girl. And if Jack falls through with his plan of getting Abe employment in his father's mill, I think I know just where he would fit into a good position."

The two companies left camp about eight o'clock. Dr. Ted and Jack Armitage waved them good-by, for they too were getting ready to start on their errand to the lone cabin in the woods.

Elmer headed one group of scouts, while Mr. Garrabrant had charge of the other. They carried plenty of lunch

along, though it was expected that they would surely be back before evening had set in.

The scout master was not at all positive about his thorough knowledge of woodcraft; for as yet it was almost wholly theoretical rather than practical with him.

"I am not above getting lost, in spite of my book knowledge," he had laughed, as he selected what boys were to accompany him; "and that is why I take Matty Eggleston, Mark Cummings, and Arthur Stansbury among my followers; because next to Elmer, they are known to possess practical ideas concerning this traveling in unknown timber. So good-by, lads; we'll look to have a good talk with you across the valley."

So day after day he expected to put the scouts "through their paces," as Lil Artha called it. To-day it was to be the great hike to the tops of the mountains, and the wig-wagging contest between the two factions. To-morrow he meant to have Elmer give further lessons along the line of following a trail, showing just how an experienced woodsman can tell from many sources how long ago the party had passed; the number of which it consisted; whether they were men, women or children; white or Indians; and even describing some of the marked peculiarities of the members comprising it.

Then later on they would have swimming contests; first aid to the injured lessons; resuscitating a person who has come near being drowned; cooking rivalry; athletics; and many other things connected with the open life.

It proved a long and arduous tramp for Elmer and his companions. He had had the privilege of choosing which mountain he would attempt to scale, and just like an ambitious boy, had selected the one he felt sure would be the more difficult.

Those who followed his lead had many times to beg of him

to halt and take a little breathing spell, for the way was very rough and much climbing of rocks had to be done in order to mount upward.

"Wow! are we ever going to get up there?" grunted Toby, who had just hated to come on this expedition at all, when he would much rather have liked hanging around camp, and examining the deflated balloon; no doubt dreaming dreams of the time when he hoped to have the chance to soar away among the clouds in one of those gas bags.

"Seems like that mountain top is just nigh as far away from us as ever," complained Larry Billings, who was puffing at a great rate, as he seemed to be rather short winded, and had to be taken to task several times for his faulty manner of walking.

"Oh! no, you're greatly mistaken there," laughed Elmer. "Distances are deceptive in the mountains, to anyone not used to measuring them with the eye. Just wait a little, and all at once you're going to realize that we're getting up handsomely. Look across the valley, and see how high we are right now! That proves it, Larry."

"Hey! what's that moving, away up on that other hill, Elmer?" cried Jasper Merriweather, the novice and real tenderfoot of the crowd; who, under the careful supervision of the scout leader of the Wolf Patrol, was actually doing himself proud, and gaining new confidence in his abilities with each passing hour.

Elmer followed the line of his outstretched finger.

"You deserve considerable praise, Jasper, for making that discovery," he declared, presently. "I can see what you mean now; though when I looked across before I didn't happen to notice. Yes, that's our other squad, climbing up just like we are, and not making any better job of it either, I think."

"Ho! they ain't near as far up, for a fact," said Nat

Scott, with pardonable pride, since he had developed into a pretty good climber.

"Well, that mountain is not so tall as ours; but then it may be even rougher, for all we know," observed Elmer. "I picked out this one because it was so high, and I always want to tackle the hardest job, if I've got any choice. It makes you feel all the better if you win out. But come on, fellows, let's pitch in. Given one more good hour's work, and I think we ought to be pretty near the crown."

"I hope so!" sighed poor Larry, who was puffing still, and rubbing his leg where he had hurt it a little on the previous day; though it was nothing so bad as Red's injury, aggravated as it had been by his stubborn determination to return to the lone hut and accompany the relief party.

Once more they struggled upward. Sometimes they found the going so very difficult that they were obliged to give each other a helping hand.

Of course the view grew finer the higher they went.

"Say, Elmer," remarked Toby, as they halted later on to get their breath; "d'ye suppose now we'll be able to glimpse dear old Hickory Ridge when we get up to the top of this mole hill?"

"Sure we will," replied the leader, cheerily. "And that alone ought to pay us for all our trouble. We've only been away a couple of days or so, but I reckon it seems an age to a lot of us, since we saw the home folks."

There was an ominous silence after that remark. Doubtless every scout was allowing his thoughts to roam tenderly back to that beloved home which he knew sheltered those who were so dear to his heart. And possibly, unseen by his fellows, a tear may even have rolled unbidden down more than one cheek. For they were but boys, after all, and same of them had never even been so far away from the home nest before.

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Elmer proved to be a true prophet, for ere the full hour was up even the doubting Larry was obliged to confess that they had gained a point not far from the summit.

This seemed to inspire the laggards to renewed efforts, so that presently, with loud cries of delight and admiration, the whole bunch struggled to the apex and had the view of their lives around them.

"Ain't this just too grand for anything?" gasped Larry, as he squatted down on a stone and tried to pick out the distant village on the ridge where home lay.

The others were doing the same; and all manner of exclamations followed, as this one or that discovered familiar landmarks, by means of which their untrained eyes could find the one particular spot about which their thoughts clustered just then.

It was not far from noon, and when Elmer declared that they had well earned the right to eat the hearty luncheon carried along, he was greeted with cries of joy; for it was a jolly hungry batch of scouts that gathered on that mountain top.

While they ate they discovered that their mates had also managed to reach their goal. But no communication was attempted until they had thoroughly rested.

Then Mr. Garrabrant started operations himself, after which he probably handed the flags over to the scout who was to make the first test of his knowledge along the line of wigwagging a message, and receiving a reply.

It proved to be interesting work, and all the boys with Elmer declared that it held a peculiar fascination and charm about it. Of course, in war times, such business must carry along with it more or less danger. They could easily picture how an operator must take great risks first of all to mount to some exposed position, where his flag could readily be seen, and then keep up a constant signaling with

another flagman far away, while the enemy would doubtless be making every effort to break up the serious communications that might spell disaster for their cause.

"Anyhow, it won't take us near so long to go down the mountain as it did to climb up here," remarked Larry, with satisfaction in his voice.

"All the same," remarked Elmer, "every fellow has got to be mighty careful just how he goes. No rushing things, you understand. It's easier to take a tumble going down than coming up. And we want no more cripples on this trip."

About three o'clock they started to descend from the peak. Every boy had to just tear himself away, after one last look at the distant ridge that lay bathed in the warm sunshine. And no one had a word to say for quite a time.

The descent was made in safety, though several times one of the boys would slip on a piece of loose shale; and once Larry might have had a severe fall only that Elmer, happening to be close beside him at the time, shot out a hand and clutched him as he was plunging headlong, after catching his heel in a root.

They all breathed a sigh of relief when the bottom of the mountain was reached. After that the going was much easier, and they soon drew near the camp.

"Wonder if the other fellows made as quick a getdown as we did?" remarked Toby, who was hobbling along, footsore, and with his muscles paining from the many severe strains they had been compelled to endure during the day; but only too glad to realize that he would soon arrive where he could once more be in touch with that wonderful sky traveler that had so fortunately dropped into their hands.

"I think it will be pretty near a tie," laughed Elmer; "for just a bit ago I had a glimpse of them, where the timber opened up, and I judged that they were as close to

away all this time while we have been in camp?" For he had a sudden inspiration that possibly Ginger might be addicted to the failing that besets so many of his color.

"'Deed an' 'deed an' I ain't touched a single drap, suh," declared the demoralized one; "'clar tuh goodness if I has. It war dar, jes' ober yander, whar de box ob crackers am alyin' right now. An' he scolded me, suh, foh interferin' wid de liberties he am takin' wid dem provisions, dat he did! Ugh! tuh t'ink dat I'd lib tuh set eyes on de Ole Nick!"

"But what makes you think it was Satan? Perhaps it was only some wandering hobo who thought he saw a good chance to steal something to eat?" and the scout master sought to hold Ginger's roving eyes fastened upon his own orbs, so as to rivet his attention, and secure a coherent answer to his question.

"Sho! dat was no human animal, suh!" exclaimed Ginger, earnestly. "He done hab a cover ob red hair, an' de wickedest grin on his face yuh ebber see. Reckon I knows de debble w'en I sees him."

"Well, from what you say, Ginger, this queer visitor seems to have had a very human weakness for crackers," remarked Mr. Garrabrant, smiling. "Was he carrying that package of biscuit when you saw him first?"

"Yas, suh, dat an' two more ob dem same. He drap it 'case he couldn't hold de lot, an' walk away too. Yuh see, suh, I war cleaning some fish dat de boys dey fotched in las' ebenin', an' which we nebber use foh breakfast dis mornin'. Den I tink I hyah some queer noise in de camp, an' I starts up dis a ways. 'Twar den dat de hairy ole critter steps outen de store tent, and jabbers at me. I was skeered nigh 'bout stiff, suh, 'clar tuh goodness I was."

"Still, you shouted, for we heard you, Ginger!" said Mr. Garrabrant.

"Reckons I did do sumpin' dat way, boss," admitted the negro, a faint grin striving to make its appearance on his ebony face. "Dat was jes' when de Ole Harry, he was asteppin' into de bushes, acarryin' two ob de boxes ob crackers in his arms."

"Do you mean to say he walked erect, on two legs?" asked the scout master.

"Shore he did, suh, right along, ahuggin' de grub wid one arm, an' shakin' his fist at me wid de udder."

"Now you talk as though it *must* have been a man—perhaps a wild man who may have been living in these woods for years?" suggested Mr. Garrabrant.

But Ginger shook his head in an obstinate fashion, saying:

"I knows right well dat he wa'n't dat, suh; I'se dead suah 'bout it!"

"But why do you say that; what proof have you it was not some sort of man, Ginger?"

"*'Case he done hab a tail, suh!*" cried the other, triumphantly.

Mr. Garrabrant smiled, and gave Elmer, who was close at his elbow all the while, a knowing wink.

"Well," he remarked, "that tail business would seem to settle one thing, Ginger. Unless this turns out to be the long-sought Missing Link, our visitor could hardly have been a human being. He was evidently an animal of *some* sort. Get that idea of the Old Nick out of your head. Listen to me, Ginger, and try to remember; did he say anything to you?"

"Yas, sah, he did, lots!" answered the black man, eagerly.

"Suppose you tell us what it was, then?" suggested the scout master, quickly.

"Dar's wha' yuh got me, Mistah Grabant," replied the

41288B

other, reluctantly. "Yuh see, suh, I nebber did git much schoolin' down in Virginny, whah I was bawn an' brought up. Nebber did go to college an' larn de dead langwidges."

"Oh! then this creature talked to you in Greek, or possibly Hebrew, did he? In other words, he chattered in an unknown tongue! Well, how about you, Oscar; did you happen to catch a glimpse of Ginger's uninvited guest?" and Mr. Garrabrant turned suddenly on Red, as though wishing to make positive that this were not a clever trick he might have been playing on the terrified black man.

"No, sir," came the ready response. "I was busy inside when I heard Ginger give that war whoop! I thought he might have burned himself at the fire, and I hurt my game pin like fun when I tried to run out. All I saw was the coon down on his marrowbones asinging that same tune about the 'debble.' That's all I know, sir, give you my word for it."

"All right, I believe you, Oscar," continued the scout master, plainly disturbed by this new mystery that had descended upon the camp, yet pretending to make light of it because he did not wish to alarm the boys under his charge. "And now, Ginger, can you point out to me just the spot where your strange friend vanished?"

"'Deed an' 'deed he ain't no friend ob mine, suh, gibes yuh my word foh dat," replied the other, solemnly. "Right ober yandah, suh, whah dem bushes hangs low. An' I declars tuh Moses, suh, I don't know right now whedder de ugly ole sinner he jes' step intuh de bushes, or go up in a cloud ob fire like de prophet ob old."

Several of the more impulsive scouts started to hurry in that direction.

"Stop, boys!" called the scout master instantly. "Come back here, please. Once before you succeeded in trampling

all sign out, so that Elmer was unable to pick up any clue. Now, I want just Elmer and Mark to go over there, to investigate. After that has been done they will report to me. And now, let's settle down in camp, for I know you are all tired. Supper is the next thing on the program."

Elmer, accompanied by his nearest chum, immediately walked carefully over in the direction of the spot which Ginger had indicated. They bent low, and seemed to be deeply interested in certain tracks they had found.

Of course the boys shot many curious glances that way, but they knew better than to disobey the positive orders given by their chief. Discipline is one of the first things taught among the Boy Scouts.

About this time Dr. Ted and Jack Armitage got back from a day at the cabin. They had much to tell about what they had occupied themselves in doing all the time, preparing things so that in a few days the family could be moved, for Mr. Garrabrant had fully decided to take the sick man and his "kiddies" down in one of the boats to Rockaway, where they could be looked after until the expedition returned.

It was getting dusk before Elmer and his chum joined the others. They did not give out any information, and to the inquiries of their curious mates returned only vague smiles and nods.

Supper was eaten with more or less clatter of tongues. There were so many interesting subjects claiming their attention that the boys hardly knew which to discuss first.

When, however, the meal was about done, Mr. Garrabrant asked Elmer to step aside with him for a short time.

"Here, let us sit down on this convenient log, Elmer," remarked the scout master. "And please tell me what you found."

"We had no difficulty in discovering the tracks, sir," replied the boy, whose experience on a Canadian prairie farm and ranch made him a valuable addition to the ranks of the Boy Scouts at such a time.

"Was it a man or an animal?" asked the gentleman, as though eager to have that mooted point settled immediately.

"Oh! an animal, sir, there can be no doubt of that," replied Elmer, smiling. "But those tracks puzzle me the worst kind. I know what the trail of a panther looks like, also that of a fox, a wolf, a bear, a deer, a coyote, a wildcat—but this was entirely different from any of these. It resembled the footprint of a human being—a child—more than anything I ever saw."

Mr. Garrabrant smiled, and nodded his head.

"I've got an idea," he said, "but go on, and tell me what else you learned. Then I'll put you wise to what I suspect."

"Well," the boy continued, "the queer thing about it is that Ginger was quite right when he said the thing walked on two legs. I could only find the marks of that many. Now, I've seen a bear do that stunt, and educated dogs, but no other animal outside of a circus."

"How about a monkey?" asked the scout master, quietly.

"Oh! Mr. Garrabrant, how could such an animal get up here? Monkeys live in tropical countries only. But I can see that you've got an idea. Please let me hear it."

"Listen then, Elmer," the other went on, seriously. "Now, I happen to know that just a month ago a certain gentleman named Colonel Hitchens, living on a country place he calls Caldwell, just a mile outside the town of Rockaway, lost a pet monkey that had been taught to do a lot of funny antics. The gentleman was an old traveler,

and had brought the animal himself from some foreign land. I remember his telling me how he caught him, by filling some cocoanut shells with strong drink, and getting the animal stupid."

"Oh! that must be it, then!" exclaimed Elmer, laughing, while the look of bewilderment left his face. "No wonder the tracks were a riddle to me. I've never as yet had the pleasure of hunting monkeys, or Barbary apes, or gorillas. Yes, sir, the more I think of it, the more I believe that you've hit the truth. It must have been a monkey, hungry for some of the things he had been used to when held a prisoner at Colonel Hitchens'."

"I saw the beast perform once," Mr. Garrabrant went on, "and he was really a marvel. He was a big chap, too, hairy and ugly. When he chattered and scowled he certainly was enough to give one a shiver. No wonder then that he frightened poor Ginger almost into convulsions. No wonder our factotum believed he had seen the Old Nick. But what had he better do about it, Elmer?"

"That's just what I wanted to speak with you about, sir," the boy remarked, with considerable eagerness. "Now the chances are that, having once made a raid on our store tent, this monkey will come again another time, perhaps even to-night."

"That sounds reasonable," replied the scout master, nodding his head. "By the way, I just happened to remember the monkey's name. It fitted him pretty well, too, as you'll admit when you see him. Diablo it was."

"Just think of it, sir, just the name Ginger gave him, too. But Mark and I have decided to set a trap to catch him. We'll fix it so that if the monkey tries to enter the store tent again he'll set off a trigger, and some queer results will follow. For one thing he'll find himself caught up in the loop of a rope, and held, kicking, off the ground

until we can come to corral him. Then, if it happens to be in the night, the falling of the trigger will set a flashlight going, and Mark's camera, placed for the occasion, will take a picture of the trespasser."

"That sounds fine, Elmer," laughed the scout master. "Now, I leave the matter in your hands entirely. Do what you think best, and I wish you success."

"How about telling the boys, sir?" asked Elmer.

Mr. Garrabrant thought it over a moment.

"Perhaps you'd better take the whole bunch into your confidence," he said, presently. "They are deeply interested, you know, and if kept in ignorance possibly some one might stumble across your plans, and upset every calculation."

And so, when Elmer returned to the fire, he had the entire bunch listening, their eyes round with wonder, as they learned what had been discovered, and also of the bright plans their chums had arranged looking to the capture of Diablo.

Only Ginger was evidently disturbed. He scratched his head as he listened, as if he could hardly believe what he saw had been of this earth, and the idea of Elmer being so rash as to want to try and make a prisoner of the Evil One gave the ignorant negro a cold shiver. Doubtless he would make sure to find a snug place to sleep that night, where nothing could get at him. His mind was still filled with foolish notions concerning that "chariot of fire" in which he might be carried out of this world into the Great Unknown.

CHAPTER XII.

LAYING A GHOST.

"Well, Elmer," remarked Mr. Garrabrant, the next morning, as he came out of his tent and met the young scout leader face to face, "I must have slept unusually sound last night, for the alarm failed to awaken me!"

"There was no alarm, sir," smiled Elmer.

"Meaning that we did not have the pleasure of a second visit from Diablo, the educated monkey, is that it?" asked the scout master, pleasantly.

"Yes, sir," the boy went on, "Diablo must have secured enough rations in his first raid to last him for twenty-four hours. But Mark and myself do not think of giving our job up yet awhile. We expect to catch a likeness of our hairy visitor, even if the trap fails to work, and hold him a prisoner. I suppose Colonel Hitchens would be very glad to have the beast back, if it turns out that this is Diablo?"

"I'm sure of it, and as he is a wealthy man, no doubt he would willingly pay a round sum to those who would return his pet," Mr. Garrabrant declared.

"Oh! we were not thinking of that, sir, I give you my word," declared Elmer; "but possibly, if we did happen to succeed, the gentleman might be willing to do something for poor Abe in return for our restoring his pet."

The scout master looked keenly at Elmer, and then thrust out his hand impulsively.

"That was well said, my boy," he remarked, with a little

quiver in his voice. "I am proud to know that you feel that way toward the unfortunate. And I give you my word, if you are so fortunate as to capture Diablo, I'll convince Colonel Hitchens that it is his *duty* to do a lot for Abe and his little flock. That boy is made of the right stuff, I'm sure, and ought to have the advantages of an education. I'm going to see that he has his chance."

"Yes, sir, just to think of a kid not over six years old being able to set a muskrat trap, and actually take skins. Why, I know a lot about the little varmints, and I give you my word, sir, they're pretty sharp. It takes a bright boy to outwit an old seasoned muskrat. He showed me quite a lot of skins he had cured, of course under his father's directions."

"And then that girl, Little Lou—think of her doing all the cooking for the family ever since her mother was taken away?" continued the gentleman. "She's a darling, if I ever saw one. I grew quite fond of her, and mean to see more of them all. But I ought to be laying out the program for to-day's work."

"What are we to try to-day, sir?" asked Elmer, who, as second in command, had privileges in talking with the scout master that none of the other lads dared assume.

"Well, as it promises to be a warm day, we might try the swimming test for one thing," replied Mr. Garrabrant, thoughtfully. "At the same time there is that feat of landing a big fish with a rod and a small line, the said fish being of course an active boy, who does his best to break away. While we're at it, we may as well go through our usual formula whereby anyone who has been nearly drowned may be resuscitated again. And last, but not least, we can have Dr. Ted give us his talk on first aid to the injured. He will get back in good time if he leaves after lunch for the Morris cabin."

"I think Chatz is waiting to speak to you, sir," remarked Elmer, who had been noticing the Southern lad hovering near for some little time, looking queerly in their direction.

"Is that so?" remarked Mr. Garrabrant. "Now I hope he hasn't been seeing more of his hobgoblins. That is about the only weakness Charles seems to have. Otherwise I find him a very sensible lad. If only he could be cured of his belief in the supernatural it would be a good thing."

"Well," laughed Elmer, "some of us would be only too glad of the chance to cure him. Shall I go away, and let him have an interview, sir?"

"No, remain, and hear what Charles has to say. It may be I shall need your services. This time the tracks of the ghost may not have been trampled out of sight, and you can give a guess at its character. I never in all my life knew of so many queer happenings inside of so short a time."

The scout master beckoned toward Chatz, and obeying the mandate the Southern boy came quickly forward.

"You wish to speak with me, Charles, I imagine?"

"Yes, sir," replied the other, with a frown on his brow.

"Has something happened again to disturb you?" inquired Mr. Garrabrant.

"Yes, sir."

"Last night, I presume, since you would have spoken before, had it happened yesterday?" the scout master continued, quietly.

"Last night it was, sir. I saw IT again!" remarked Chatz, appearing to swallow something that was in his throat.

"Oh! you mean that mysterious white object which appeared to you on the other occasion, and seemed to assume all the characteristics of a supernatural visitor? In other

words, Charles, your pet ghost?" remarked Mr. Garrabrant.

The boy flushed, but held his ground.

"Of course," he said, slowly, "I understand what a contempt you have for any such idea, sir; and indeed, I only wish it could be shown to me that this is only some natural object, and not of the other world. I'd be too glad to know it. I hate to think I'm given to such ideas, but they seem to be a part of my nature, and I can't help it, try as I may."

"Well, perhaps we may be able to assist you, Charles," returned the genial scout master, laying a hand on the lad's shoulder in a way that quite won his confidence. "Now tell me what you saw, when and where, also what it looked like."

"I think it was in about the same quarter as before, sir. My watch happened to come late in the night this time, in fact just before dawn broke. I heard again that blood-curdling sound, a plain 'woof'! and raising my head I could just make it out in the darkness. It was white, as before, and it moved! Then all of a sudden it seemed to vanish most mysteriously."

"Well, did the other sentry see anything, Charles?" asked Mr. Garrabrant.

"We had arranged it all between us, sir, Ty Collins and myself. And he will tell you, sir, that he saw just what I did," replied Chatz, earnestly.

"That sounds as though you might have seen *something,* then," smiled Mr. Garrabrant. "And Elmer, you were so successful in picking out those other tracks, suppose you try again."

"Shall I go now, sir?" asked the other, readily.

"I would like you to. If you find a trail, you might

follow it up a bit. Perhaps Charles would like to accompany you."

"Yes, sir, I would, if you didn't object," replied the Southern lad, quickly.

"Very well," nodded the scout master. "Report to me when you are through, Elmer."

So the two boys went away together. Some of the others, seeing them bending down as though examining the ground, made a move as if to join them, but Mr. Garrabrant was watching, and called them back.

He saw Elmer, followed by the wondering Chatz, walk slowly away, his head bent low, as though he were following some sort of trail.

And the scout master laughed softly to himself as he muttered:

"I fancy Charles is about to have a little surprise, now that Elmer has found a trail to follow. Because, as a true believer in ghosts, he must realize that anything that leaves traces behind can hardly claim supernatural qualities."

Twenty minutes afterwards, shortly before breakfast was ready, the two boys came back again. Chatz was smiling in a queer way, but Elmer looked like a sphinx.

The latter, obeying a beckoning finger, hurried over to join Mr. Garrabrant.

"Unless my eyes deceive me, Elmer," remarked the gentleman, with a quizzical expression on his handsome face, "you've been up to your old tricks again, and finding out things. How is it, do you plead guilty to the charge?"

"I guess I'll just have to, sir," replied the boy, also smiling now.

"Then you found a trail, did you?"

"Yes, sir," Elmer went on, "a positive one; though the ground was that hard a greenhorn could never have seen it. And while Chatz kept at my side I don't think he

dreamed what I was doing as we went along. Then, about a hundred yards away I heard that same queer 'woof' he spoke of."

"It didn't give you a shock, I warrant, Elmer?" remarked the scout master.

"Well, you see, sir, I've had too much to do with cattle not to recognize the snort of a startled cow! And that was what we saw just ahead of us. She had been lying down, chewing her cud, and our coming had caused her to get on her feet."

"Did she happen to have a white face, Elmer?" laughed Mr. Garrabrant.

"Just what she did, sir," the boy replied. "Chatz looked at me, and turned pale, then red; after which he laughed till the tears ran down his cheeks. I think we put quite a spoke in his spook wheel, sir. He won't be so ready to believe in supernatural visitors after this."

"It was well done, Elmer, and I thank you for it. Now, let's to breakfast, for we have a strenuous day before us," and the scout master led the way to the place where a bounteous meal had been spread for the entire troop of scouts.

During the morning the swimming tests were started, and Mr. Garrabrant, who was a splendid swimmer himself, took charge of matters. Some excellent work was done, and the timid ones taught how to strike out, to float, and to tread water, as well as various races inaugurated that were full of fun.

After that came the wonderful fishing contest, where the boys did what they could to land one of their mates who played the part of a hooked fish, fighting to get away, just as a monster scaly prize like a tarpon might have done.

Of course Elmer was the leader in this game, for he had had much more experience as a sportsman than any of the

rest, but there were several who proved themselves good seconds in the trial, and who would make the winner look to his laurels in the near future.

That brought them to noon, and matters were allowed to simmer while they got busy cooking a lunch to satisfy the tremendous appetites that the vigorous labor of the morning had developed.

Ted and Lil Artha expected to take a tramp over to the lone cabin during the afternoon. They could not start, however, until the concluding work of the day had been attended to. As this was to be "first aid to the injured" the presence of the only budding doctor in camp would be required, in order to explain many important things connected with this valuable adjunct to scout lore.

It was possibly nearly three o'clock before the two lads got started. But that did not matter much, for by this time Ted had become very familiar with the way of the blazed trail, and could follow it "with his eyes blindfolded," as he boastingly remarked, though Elmer knew this was hardly so.

Some of the scouts were out on the lake, trying to coax a mess of fish to come closer to the fire and get warmed up. The taste of browned trout haunted them, and even Mr. Garrabrant admitted that the way Elmer cooked the fish, they were finer than any he had ever eaten. It was to have the salt pork in a hot frying pan, until it had been well tried out, then having rolled each fish in cracker crumbs, or corn meal if the former were not handy, they were placed over the fire in the pan to brown.

Another time Elmer broiled the fish, and the boys were uncertain as to which method they liked most. When they ate the trout cooked one way that excelled, and next day when the other method was tried they believed it could not be equalled.

Evening was not far away when a shout attracted the attention of all those in camp. Even the few who happened to be inside the tents came hurrying out to see what it meant.

"That must have been Lil Artha," declared Elmer immediately. "Nobody else has so loud a whoop. Yes, there they come, he and Ted, hurrying down the side of the mountain. They seem to be in something of a hurry, too."

"And look at Ted waving his hand, will you?" exclaimed Toby, beginning to get excited himself. "He wouldn't act that way, fellers, except that there's something gone wrong. Gee! I hope now the old man ain't been taken sudden, and handed in his checks! That would be tough on the kids, now!"

Mr. Garrabrant heard what Toby said, but made no remark. He was waiting for the coming of the two scouts who had gone across the mountain on their errand of mercy.

The long-legged Lil Artha could have easily outrun his comrade had he chosen, but he made no effort to do so. Still, as they drew closer, it could be easily seen that both boys showed unmistakable evidences of some tremendous excitement. And, naturally, their fellow scouts almost trembled with eagerness to learn what could have happened to affect them in this way.

Three minutes later and they drew up in front of the group, panting, flushed—their eyes sparkling with suppressed news.

CHAPTER XIII.

TAKEN BY SURPRISE.

"WHAT'S the matter with you boys?" demanded the scout master, as Ted and Lil Artha drew up in front of him.

"They've come in on Abe, sir, and are threatening to do all sorts of awful things to him, the great beasts!" exclaimed the tall runner, between pants.

"Speak plainer, please," Mr. Garrabrant said, sternly, so as to subdue some of the rampant excitement that threatened to impede a clear flow of words. "Who came in on Abe—was it animals you meant, or men?"

"Men, thir, and two of the toughest you ever thaw," Ted managed to declare. "They were eating up all the stuff we've been at such pains to carry over, and threatened the thick man with all thorts of trouble because he thaid he didn't have thuch a thing as a drop of whisky in hith place."

"Two hoboes, most likely," muttered the scout master, as his firm teeth came together with a snap that meant business.

"That's what I thaid, thir, but Lil Artha, he theemed to think he recognized the bullies as a couple of jail birds," Ted went on.

"You see, sir," Arthur spoke up as he saw Mr. Garrabrant look questioningly at him, "I remembered seeing the pictures of those two rascals that broke into some house near Rockaway last Spring. They had it posted up in po-

lice headquarters at Hickory Ridge when I went in to pay for our dog license. And I don't soon forget faces, sir, or names either, for that matter. Unless I miss my guess these two ugly scamps were Jim Rowdy and Bill Harris, wanted bad in Rockville, with a reward offered for their capture."

"You may be right, Theodore," observed the scout master, seriously. "They were never caught, I remember. The strange thing about it was, that the house they entered and robbed was that of my friend, Colonel Hitchens."

"The same gentleman who owned the lost monkey?" cried one of the scouts.

"Exactly. But this is a serious matter for us, boys," the scout master went on. "Our new friends are in danger, for there can be no telling to what extremes such unprincipled scoundrels might go, once they started. Perhaps they may have an old grudge against Abe, for the boys say they were threatening him. And it gives me a cold chill to think of these two innocent children being in their power."

"Will you go over, thir, and try to do thomething?" asked Ted, eagerly.

"Surely," came the instant reply. "I would be unworthy to call myself a man if I failed in my duty there. But tell us more, please, how did you first learn of the presence of these ruffians there, and did you give away the fact that you had discovered them?"

"Oh! no, thir, they didn't thee us a bit!" exclaimed Ted.

"We happened to hear loud voices, you see, sir, when we were close to the joint," said Arthur, bent on having his share in the recital.

"Tho we crept up, as thly as any Indian could have done," added Ted.

"And peeked in at the window, just like we did that night we went over in a bunch," the tall lad remarked.

"Then we thaw what it meant," Ted continued, catching his breath again. "Those two big bullies had been eating, and made poor Little Lou cook nigh everything we left there yesterday. Why, they were as hungry as hogs, I guess."

"And they kept on shaking their fists at poor Abe, who was lying on his cot, too weak to do anything," Lil Artha took up the narrative. "He seemed to be atryin' to get them to let up on him, but he looked nearly done for."

"Then we just crawled away again," Ted concluded, "and run pretty near all the way back, because we knew you would want uth to report. Lil Artha wanted to tackle 'em by ourselves, but it was thilly to think we could do anything against a pair of desperate jailbirds like that."

"Under the circumstances I commend your discretion, Theodore," said the scout master, "though the readiness of Arthur to take chances in a good cause does him credit too. But let's hurry and eat supper. I can be arranging my plans meanwhile, and selecting those I would want to accompany me over the mountain."

"I hope you will take me, sir!" exclaimed Matty Eggleston.

"And me, too, sir!" exclaimed half a dozen others, in a breath.

Even the two returned scouts were anxious not to be left behind.

"I'm not tired a little bit, Mr. Garrabrant!" Lil Artha hastened to declare, and Dr. Ted said ditto to that.

"Give me time, boys, to consider," the gentleman had said, waving them away.

Supper was quickly announced, and they made record time in getting away with a fine meal. No one even thought

to remark upon the fact that it tasted better than any meal ever eaten under a roof, which had come to be a standing saying with the scouts by this time.

Many an anxious look was cast toward Mr. Garrabrant. They saw that his eyes had been roving around the circle, as though he might be mentally choosing those who were to be favored with a place at his side during this new errand of mercy across the mountain that frowned down upon the camp. And every scout was eager to be among the lucky ones, even the usually timid Jasper Merriweather.

" I have decided upon the following to accompany me: Ginger will go, because he is a man, and will be apt to inspire more or less respect in the hearts of the two rascals. Then there are Elmer, Matty, Larry Billings, Arthur Stansbury, Charlie Maxfield, and Theodore. I am taking him because we may happen to have need of his professional services," and when Mr. Garrabrant said this as though he really meant it, who could blame Ted for unconsciously pushing out his chest a bit with pride?

There could be no demur to this ultimatum. So those who were fated to remain did what they could to get their more fortunate chums ready for the excursion. The stoutest cudgels possible were hunted up, and handed over, with recommendations as to their convincing qualities if once applied to a stubborn head.

" However," said the scout master, as they were ready to leave, " I am in hopes that we can take the rascals by surprise, so that there will not be any real necessity for violence. The rest of you stick by the camp while we are gone. You can wait up for us, if you want."

" Sure we will, sir! " declared one. " We couldn't any more sleep than water can run up hill."

" And don't any of you meddle with the little trap we've

got set by the store tent, remember, please," Elmer flung over his shoulder as he was marching away.

Then they were off.

Counting Mr. Garrabrant and Ginger, they were eight in all, surely a strong enough bunch to overcome two men, if only they might take the ruffians by surprise. Ginger was far from being a coward when it came to things he could understand. This fact was known to Mr. Garrabrant, which was the reason he took the colored man and brother along. Besides, his heft might have considerable influence in causing the two men to submit.

As before, they carried a couple of lanterns. The light from these came in very handy to save the boys from many an ugly tumble, where roots lay across their path or rocks cropped up in the way.

They conversed in whispers only. And as they finally drew near the lone cabin, even this style of talk was stopped by order of Mr. Garrabrant, so that they now crept along in absolute silence.

He had told the boys of his plans, so that each member of the little party knew just what was expected of him.

Presently they caught sight of a dim light ahead. Then came the sound of loud and gruff voices. This convinced them that the two rascals had not left the cabin.

Creeping closer, they could finally see through the little opening. And thus the scout master was enabled to complete the plan he had arranged.

When he gave the word, Ginger and the boys were to jump in by way of the open door. Meantime he expected to thrust his arm through the window and cover the pair of desperate rascals with the revolver he had brought along. Mr. Garrabrant gave evidence of being in deadly earnest, for he knew that was a serious matter that confronted them, and one not to be handled with gloves.

When he heard Elmer give the cry of the whip-poor-will three times he knew they were all in their places. Accordingly, he suddenly thrust his arm through the small window that had no glass, and covered one of the men with his weapon.

"Stand still, both of you! The hut is surrounded, and if you try to escape or offer resistance it will be the worse for you! Seize them, men!"

As Mr. Garrabrant called this out, and the two astonished scoundrels sat there, utterly unable to collect their senses, such was the complete surprise, through the doorway tumbled a crowd that hurled itself upon them. Before they could grasp the fact that with one exception these were only half-grown boys, wearing the khaki uniforms of the scouts, and not regular soldiers, the men had their hands tied behind them.

As they realized how completely they had been caught napping both of them started on a string of hard words, and looked daggers at their young captors.

"Stop that, now!" Mr. Garrabrant exclaimed, as he made his appearance in the hut, or I shall be under the painful necessity of putting gags between your teeth. Not another word from either of you, remember!"

Perhaps they recognized the tone of authority, or it may have been that they had no desire to force him to put his threat into execution. At any rate, they took it out in deep mumblings after that.

The scout master saw to it himself that their lashings were secure. Some of the boys had carried along a new supply of food for Abe and his family, understanding the inroads that had been made in their limited stock.

The sick man was full of gratitude for this second rescue on the part of his new-found friends. He told them how these two scoundrels had come to his cabin and taken

possession—that he knew who they were, but that some years back they had been honest charcoal burners the same as himself.

"Well," said Mr. Garrabrant, "they graduated from that honest class some time ago, and have made names for themselves as yeggmen and thieves. They are badly wanted right now in Rockaway, where some months back they robbed a residence, and nearly killed a butler who caught them in the act, and recognized them too. Boys, when you feel rested, we will be on our way back to camp with our prisoners. To-morrow I shall take them down the river in a boat, and deliver them over to the authorities."

All of which intelligence made the gloom gather deeper on the hard countenances of Jim Rowdy and Bill Harris.

It took twice as long for them to make the march back to camp as when they went toward the lone cabin. In the first place, some of the boys were almost exhausted, particularly Ted and Lil Artha, who were covering the ground for the second time since noon. Then again, the two men, having their arms bound behind their backs, stumbled so often that they had to be helped.

But along about eleven they came in sight of the cheery camp fire, and how very welcome it did look too. The boys greeted it with a shout, that was answered by those who had been left behind.

When it was seen that they were bringing prisoners back with them, Red and those who had remained at home with the lame scout became thrilled with eagerness to hear the full particulars. Of course the others were just as ready to relate all that had occurred, and for some time the clatter of tongues would have made one believe he must be somewhere in the neighborhood of the Tower of Babel.

Mr. Garrabrant realized that they were dealing with a pair of hard citizens, and he was resolved to leave nothing

undone looking to their remaining prisoners. So he personally looked to their bonds before lying down, in order to make sure they could not break loose.

A double guard was to be stationed on this night, because of the unusual conditions existing. It would be too bad, after all their trouble, should any accident occur whereby these men regained their freedom.

So when the camp quieted down finally, there were just four boys stationed at certain points, and with orders to keep the fire burning brilliantly all the time. The balance "slept on their arms," as Lil Artha called it—that is, they kept those handy cudgels close beside them, where they could be readily found in case a sudden need arose for their services. Because Mr. Garrabrant could not be entirely positive that the two prisoners did not have friends of a like character somewhere up here in the wilderness, who might attempt their rescue.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE THINGS THAT MAKE BOYS MANLY.

Mr. Garrabrant laid his plans during the night, and when morning came he announced them to his boys.

"I shall take these two men down to Rockaway to-day," he said, "and deliver them over to the authorities. Ginger will accompany me, and between us we can pull the boat up the current again, starting possibly in the morning. If we arrive there in good time, I may get a car and drive over to Hickory Ridge, for there are several things I ought to see about, that slipped my mind before."

"And if you happen to see anybody who asks about us, sir, just tell them we're getting along dandy," declared Lil Artha.

"So say we all of us," sang out several others of the scouts.

"Tell my folks they were poor prophets," remarked Jasper Merriweather.

"In what way, my boy?" inquired the scout master; though, truth to tell, he could give a pretty good guess.

"Oh! ma, she said she'd give me one night to stay away; and pa, he told her that two would see my finish. But here we're going on our first week, and I'm feeling just fine. Not a bit homesick, tell 'em, Mr. Garrabrant, please. And bound to stay the whole ten days, or bust."

"Good for you, Jasper, old top!" laughed Lil Artha, patting the real tenderfoot encouragingly on the back.

"And Mr. Garrabrant," put in Ty Collins, who was a

pretty good " feeder " as some of the other boys often remarked, " don't you think you might pick up a little more grub while you have the chance. You see, we didn't count on so many mouths to feed while we were up here, and the way that stuff is disappearing is sure a caution. I know, because I do a lot of the cooking, you see, sir."

" Why, yes, Tyrus, I had that on my mind," laughed the jovial scout master. " And we'll try and find room in the boat for a nice ham, some bacon, and a few more things that boys like. I guess I'm a good provider, taken on the whole. You see, we didn't count on feeding Abe Morris and his family, or these two gentlemen here, besides the frolicsome monkey that has taken a fancy for our eatables. If I happen to run across Colonel Hitchens I shall let him know we've got an eye out for his runaway pet."

The two men were allowed to eat breakfast, one at a time, and Mr. Garrabrant and Ginger stood over them while the operation of feeding was in progress. Much as both of the desperadoes might have liked to attempt flight, they lacked the nerve to start trouble when those two stalwart men were within reach. And so, although they scowled and muttered, they made no resistance when they were tied up again.

Mr. Garrabrant had found quite a nice little assortment of deadly weapons upon the pair, which he had confiscated. These he meant to take along with him, not feeling safe in leaving such things in camp, where several of the boys were quite unaccustomed to handling firearms, and some accident might ensue, for which he would be responsible.

Although no one suspected it until they heard the click of his shutter, Mark had managed to snap off the entire outfit as they stood there, assisting Mr. Garrabrant load his prisoners into the boat.

And it might be taken for granted that the official pho-

tographer of the camp had seized upon an opportunity when the two prisoners' faces were in full view, so that no one could afterwards reasonably doubt their claim to having captured the desperate men so long wanted by the Rockaway authorities.

Of course the camp was left in full charge of the assistant scout master, Elmer Chenowith, with a parting injunction from Mr. Garrabrant that the boys were to render his representative just as much respect as though it were himself.

There could be no doubt about that being done, since Elmer was a universal favorite among his fellows, and had hardly an enemy in all Hickory Ridge.

"I reckon, suh, we can manage to get along all right while you are away," Chatz Maxfield had called out reassuringly, after the boat had left the landing, with Ginger working industriously at the oars, the two prisoners huddled amidships, and the scout master seated astern, where he could keep his eye pretty much all the time on the slippery customers.

"If I wasn't positive about that, Charles, I'd never be leaving you," was what Mr. Garrabrant replied, as he waved his hand to them.

Presently the fast-moving boat swept around a bend, and was lost to view. Several of the boys sighed a little, and looked a bit downcast. Despite their assumption of freedom from homesickness they could not help feeling that their leader would perhaps be in "dear old Hickory Ridge" that afternoon, and might even pass by their beloved homes, which it seemed they had not seen for an age.

Of course Elmer, who had roved more or less, was not in this class. He knew better than to make fun of them, however. Between himself and Mark they had many a quiet

laugh over the way the fellows made out to be so free from care.

"I bet you it seems like a coon's age to some of them since they said good-by to mother and father," Mark managed to remark, as they stood there watching the rest gaze down river after the vanished link that was to bind them with civilization.

"Sure it does," Elmer had agreed. "Do you know that little story about the kid who ran away from home, and what an eternity it seemed to him?"

"I don't seem to remember," replied the other. "What happened, Elmer?"

"Why, he spent the day of his life, you know. He had made up his mind in the beginning that he would never come back. Then at noon he determined that a whole month would give his folks a good scare. The afternoon hung on terribly. Minutes seemed hours, and at last he just couldn't stand it any longer. He had spent his last penny, but it was getting night, and he had never been without a home in the dark before."

"Yes, I can understand that, because once I did it too," laughed Mark; "but don't mind me, Elmer, go right along with the story. What happened to him?"

"Nothing. That's where the fun came in," replied the other. "You see his folks understood that kid, and they just made up their minds to punish him by not paying the slightest attention to him. So he came sneaking into the sitting room where dad was reading the paper, and mom was knitting. Neither of them even looked at him. He thought that mighty queer, when he had expected to be hugged and kissed and cried over like one who had been lost a year.

"After a long time, when he had coughed, and moved about without either of them paying the slightest atten-

tion to him, the boy was struck with an idea. He would say something that *must* make them realize the near calamity that had happened. So he bent down to stroke the back of the old tabby that was purring by the fire, and he says, says he:

" ' Oh! I see you still have the same old cat you used to have when I was home! ' "

Mark burst into a hearty laugh.

" I get the point, Elmer, all right, and I guess it applies to a few of our fellows, but on the whole they've acted just fine. A better bunch of good-hearted boys it would be hard to find anywhere. And I tell you this outing's going to do every mother's son of them a heap of good. What they learn in this camp will pay a dozen times over for the trouble it's taken. I hope Mr. Garrabrant gets safely down to Rockaway with his boatload of human freight. Perhaps there won't be a sensation in Hickory Ridge when the news gets out that the Boy Scouts captured those bad men, and sent them to the police of Rockaway with their compliments. I guess that's going some for a new organization of tenderfeet scouts, eh? "

" I should say yes," replied the young scout leader, emphatically. " And after all, we've only got one more mystery to solve to have the slate clear."

" You mean about that monkey business, I suppose? " suggested Mark.

" Yes; and possibly we may be lucky enough to have that settled before Mr. Garrabrant comes back again," Elmer remarked, confidently.

" You think then we are due for another visit from Diablo, say to-night? "

" It stands to reason," said Elmer, " that he will have eaten up all those crackers long before then, and knowing where we keep our supplies, you can count on him paying

another call. So many around the camp in the daytime will keep him shy. You remember there were only Ginger and Red at home all day, when he was here before."

"All right," remarked his chum. "We'll try and have a warm reception ready for our friend Diablo. He's apt to be the most surprised monkey ever, once he hits that trigger; what with the loop snatching him up in the air, the flashlight going off with a great dazzling glow, and the yells of the boys as they get on to the racket. I just hope it turns out a good picture. It'll sure be the star of the whole collection. What?"

Elmer took charge, and proceeded to start the ball rolling. They were not intending to have any strenuous work while the scout master was away, but some of them coaxed Elmer to give a few exhibitions of throwing a rope, and doing some other little tricks that he had learned while up on that Canada cattle farm.

He also went deeper into the track business, and the boys were so anxious to learn all they could about this fascinating study, that they all spent hours trying to find new footprints so that they could drag Elmer thither, and get him to tell the sort of little animal that had made them, what his habits were, and all about him.

Then after lunch some words brought up the subject of picture writing. Elmer had more or less to say about that, for he had been among the Indians, and copied any amount of their queer methods of communicating.

"It's just as simple as falling off a log, fellows," he said. "If a little kid were trying to make you understand that three men had gone down river in a boat, if he had any sense at all he'd draw a canoe with three figures in it holding paddles. A rock sticking up would have something that looked like foam on one side. That would tell you the water was running so, and that the canoe was going *down*

the river. If they were being pursued, in the boat behind a figure would be firing a gun. Then they escape, for they go ashore and make a fire. All got away, for there are still three of them. And that's the easy way it goes. It just can't be too simple. A child might read it. And that's Indian picture writing. Now, suppose some of you try it. If anybody can read it right off the reel, then you've made a success of the job. But remember, this isn't any rebus or puzzle."

So for some time the boys employed themselves in practicing this simple art, under the directions of the young scout master. They found it lots of fun, and of course there was more or less shouting over some of the wonderful pictures drawn, which the artists themselves could hardly designate, after their work became cold.

Dr. Ted and Mark had gone off with some more food, to find out how Abe and his family were, after the exciting experience of the preceding day, and to tell them that their unwelcome visitors were by that time safely locked up in the Rockaway strong box.

Mark wished to get a few pictures of the two "kids" in their native woods. They would not look the same after they reached civilization, where kindly women would only too willingly take them in hand, and fit them out with new clothes.

Toby fairly haunted the spot where the balloon lay in a heap, just as they had piled it up. Doubtless the boy was indulging himself with castles in the air connected with the time to come, in the dim future, when he too might have a chance to fly through the clouds in one of these big gas bags, or with a modern aeroplane, which would of course be much better.

And so the day wore on.

As evening approached some of the boys mentally pic-

tured Mr. Garrabrant talking with the good people of Hickory Ridge, and in each case it was a father or mother who so proudly heard what wonderful progress the boy was making in learning to take care of himself when left to his own resources.

Things went on as usual. They had plenty of trout for supper, of which dainty the scouts seemed never to tire. Then a huge mess of rice had been boiled, which, served with sugar and condensed milk, proved a good dessert. But before that was reached they had a stew made of tinned beef, Boston baked beans and some corn, while Ty Collins showed his skill as a flapjack maker by turning out several heaps of pretty fair pancakes.

Perhaps some of the scouts ate more heavily of these last than they should, for it was noted that at various times during the night a boy here or there would get to talking in his sleep, and show signs of restlessness that could only come from indigestion. Nevertheless, when the time came for retiring, Elmer gave the signal for taps to be sounded on the bugle, as Lil Artha declared, "everything was lovely, and the goose hung high!"

CHAPTER XV.

HOW THE TRAP WORKED.

Before they turned in after the rest, Elmer and his closest chum, Mark, spent a little time doing something mysterious over in the vicinity of the tent in which the extra stores were kept.

The boys understood that it had more or less connection with the expected visit of the liberty-loving monkey, Diablo, but like good scouts they minded their own business.

Everyone had been warned to keep away from that same tent under penalty of being given the surprise of their lives, and of a most unpleasant nature at that. Of course, no one knew exactly what the scout leader had arranged; but all the same they felt positive it would meet the peculiar emergency. And each boy made up his mind that during his term as sentry nothing could induce him to saunter near that marked territory.

A tall and vigorous young hickory sapling had by accident started on its way toward some day becoming the king of the woods right there in front of the tent opening. And Elmer, quick to grasp the opportunities which fortune threw at his feet, had made use of this same healthy and sound young tree. From time of old he knew the value of hickory when one wanted a particularly springy bow.

He and Mark were panting a little when they finished a certain little job which doubtless had a bearing on the game. And strange to say, the upright hickory sapling no longer pointed toward the beckoning sky; but stood there with bowed head in meek subjection to the will of man.

"Think the trigger will run smooth enough?" queried Mark, as they stood back to gaze at the evidence of their handiwork.

"I've greased it!" chuckled Elmer. "That's what they do out West when a big bear trap is used, and there's danger of the thing holding too well. Do you want to step inside this loop, and give it a try, Mark?"

"Please excuse me this time, old fellow," laughed the other. "I'm very well satisfied to stand on the earth as I am just now, and don't hanker about getting any nearer the clouds. I leave all that ambition to others, and particularly animals used to climbing trees. How about the rest of the tent, Elmer?"

"Pegged down so solid that a mouse would have trouble crawling under," came the immediate and confident response.

"That means if our friend Diablo is as hungry as we believe, and is determined to make another of his raids on our grub, he's just *got* to take advantage of the open door, eh, Elmer?"

"That's just what he does," replied the scout leader. "And we're going to get him one way or the other, going or coming. If he happens to miss getting caught as he trips into the tent, he won't be so lucky when he comes out. You see, at that time he's apt to have his arms full of the things we left around loose. He's greedy, like all monkeys, and will try to carry as much he can. Then he can't see quite so well where to step. Flip! bang! and there you are! Lil Artha hit it closer than he thought when he said everything was lovely and the goose hung high! We expect *our* goose to do just that same thing."

"Huh! I guess this is what they call putting your foot in it, eh, Elmer?" chuckled Mark.

"We hope it will be, that's right. But as everything has

been done to a turn, don't you think we'd better hunt out our blankets? Perhaps Diablo may be watching us right now, crazy to get started on his raid. And then again, it may be he's far away from here to-night, and we'll find we've had all our trouble for our pains."

"But you don't think that last, honest now, Elmer?" queried Mark.

"If I did I wouldn't have gone to all the trouble I did," returned the other. "Take one last look over your camera, and the flashlight powder cartridge. All O. K. is it? Then let's leave here, and trust to luck for the rest."

"I don't believe I'll get much sleep, for expecting to hear a racket!" Mark declared, as they walked conspicuously away from the vicinity of the store tent, so that the keen-eyed monkey would see them, if, as they suspected, Diablo were hiding somewhere close by, waiting for his chance to make another descent on the camp where all those delicious dainties were kept, to which he had grown accustomed during the period of his captivity—and liberty without these could not be proving all it was cracked up to be.

"Oh! I wouldn't let a little thing like this keep me awake," said Elmer.

"Well, you see it's different with me," declared his chum. "I've had almost no experience in such exciting things, while you have been through rafts of it. But honest now, I'm hoping that our little game pans out a success. I've laid that big bag where we can grab it up on the run, and I saw you fixing the ropes handy. Let Mr. Diablo just give that loop a tiny jerk when he gets his hind foot in it, and oh! my, won't he be the worst rattled jabberer ever!"

Now, secretly Elmer himself was in quite a little flutter of excitement; but he knew how to hold himself in check better than did Mark. He calmly arranged his blanket as usual, and then settled himself down as though such a thing

as being aroused in the middle of the night were unthought of.

And having practiced the control of his powers he did go to sleep very shortly; absolutely refusing to allow his mind to become active by dwelling on any subject that might agitate him.

Silence came upon the camp.

The fire sparkled and crackled as from time to time one of the sentries stepped over to toss fresh fuel upon it. But acting under orders, they refrained religiously from ever passing near the store tent.

If one of them chanced to be particularly vigilant, he must have discovered a shadowy figure that came slipping down from the branches of a tree that grew not a dozen feet away from the apparently abandoned tent.

It made not the least noise, which would seem to indicate that it must possess feet shod with velvet; but crouching low, after a suspicious look around, started toward the depot of supplies.

Passing around this tent, sniffing at various places, and apparently seeking a means of entrance, the dusky figure finally came to the front, where that small opening stood so very invitingly in view.

Elmer, sleeping soundly, was suddenly awakened by a terrific screech, angry and vehement; immediately succeeded by the shrillest scolding and chattering he had ever heard.

Throwing aside his blanket, he started to crawl out of the tent. Mark was at his heels, laughing for all he was worth, and chortling:

"It worked, Elmer, the trap went off! We've got him, I guess, all right! Great guns; just listen to the racket he's making, will you? Oh! hurry! hurry! before all the blood runs to his head!"

It was only his great impatience that made him imagine

Elmer dallied; for to tell the truth, the scout leader emerged from that tent in double-quick time.

Both of them "scooted" for the spot where all that row was sounding; no other word would so fully describe the manner of their progress as well as Lil Artha's favorite expression.

They were not alone in this forward rush. From every tent came creeping figures, as the scouts crawled forth. And by degrees the screeching of the monkey was actually drowned in the greater clamor of boyish shouts.

It seemed almost as though Pandemonium must have broken loose in that camp of the Hickory Ridge Boy Scouts, for a dozen pair of sturdy young lungs can make considerable noise once they break loose.

It was a ridiculous spectacle that greeted them as they reached the store tent. The bent-over hickory sapling had sprung obediently erect as soon as the shooting of the trigger had released it from the crotch in which its apex had been gripped. And swaying back and forth, attempting all manner of high gymnastics, was a grotesque figure that stretched out its arms, and made frantic efforts to reach the body of the sapling, so as to climb up.

"Get the bag, Elmer!" cried Mark, the second that he arrived.

But already had the scout leader snatched that article up and prepared to clap it around the struggling monkey, taking care to avoid being caught by those waving hands.

"Quick! the rope!" he gasped, after he had made a forward movement, enclosing the gyrating body in the stout sack.

Mark knew what he was doing, and in a brief time, during which the rest of the boys stood around watching in wonder, the struggling monkey was secured.

"Here, Toby, hold this rope end for a minute!" called Mark.

The other was only too willing to obey, for it gave him a chance to say he had had a hand in the great capture of the hairy thief. Ten seconds later there was a sudden brilliant flash that caused some of the scouts to cry out, in the belief that a storm had crept upon them, with the lightning giving advance warning of its coming.

"It's Mark, and he took a snap flashlight picture of the crowd standing around in pajamas!" cried Lil Artha. "Oh! my, what a sight that will be to chase away the blues. If only my red stripes show, I'll be the happy one."

"How about the first flash—did it go off when the monk pulled the trigger, Mark?" demanded Elmer.

"Sure it did," broke in Tom Cropsey, who had been one of the sentries on duty at the time; "and gave me a nasty scare. I never dreamed you had fixed things up that way, Elmer; and at first I thought something had exploded. But what can we do with the critter, now that we've got him?"

"Oh! that's all fixed," laughed Mark. "Elmer made a stout collar which can be fastened around his neck so he just can't get it off. To that a rope is fastened, and Mr. Diablo will amuse the camp with his stunts the rest of the time we stay up here on old Lake Solitude. Ready to work it, Elmer?"

"Yes, give me a hand here, please," replied the scout leader, who had been cautiously taking the enmeshed body of the still struggling monkey down from the straightened hickory sapling.

"Why, here's luck!" exclaimed Elmer, presently. "As sure as you live he's got a collar on right now, with a ring for a rope. There's a trailing foot of stuff fastened to it, showing just how he got away. All I have to do is to tie

our stout line to that ring so even the clever fingers of a monkey can't unfasten it."

When this was done, and the other end of the rope made fast to the sapling that had assisted in Diablo's downfall, by degrees the rope encircling the beast was removed, and then the bag. The prisoner was inclined to be a little savage at first, because his taste of freedom had made him somewhat wild, and besides, these were all strangers to him.

But he was very hungry, and upon being offered food seized it eagerly. After that they would have very little trouble with Diablo, though he proved to be a treacherous rascal, and pinched more than a few of the boys who ventured to be too familiar with him.

The scouts were ordered back to their blankets, and once again did the camp relapse into silence, save for the grunting of the satisfied Diablo, as he continued to feast upon the sweet cakes with which he had been supplied.

In this manner, then, was the last source of trouble laid low. Ghosts and thieves they had encountered, but in the end success had rewarded their efforts, and it began to look as though the balance of their stay in camp might be more in the nature of a picnic than the first few days and nights had proven.

When morning came the boys were early astir, and crowded around to stare at the prisoner. But with his stomach comfortably filled Diablo was lazy and good natured. He refused to be bothered, and curled up on the ground like a dog, made out to sleep, though a careful examination might have disclosed the fact that one eye was partly open, and as soon as a boy entered the store tent he was on his feet, begging.

But Ginger would be the one who must feel the most sat-

isfaction over the capture, for it would ease his mind concerning the necessity for cutting his stay on the earth short, and accompanying the Evil One in a " chariot of fire."

So that day passed very slowly as they awaited the coming of the scout master and his " ebony galley slave " who was to row the boat up-stream.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE LAST FLICKERING CAMP FIRE DIES OUT.

"THERE'S the outpost making signals, Elmer," said Mark, about three o'clock in the afternoon.

Two of the scouts, who were pretty well up in wigwag work, had been dispatched to a knob part way up the mountain, from which a fine view of the lower lake could be obtained, as well as the zigzag course of the connecting Paradise Creek.

"Looks like they must have sighted our scout master, then," declared Elmer, as he left what he was engaged in doing to hasten over to where the balance of the signal flags lay.

Snatching one up he began to wave it in certain eccentric movements which Red Huggins, who held the book, knew to be a query as to what the outposts or videttes had discovered.

"There! he's starting to answer. Everybody watch sharp, and write down what you make it!" exclaimed the scout leader.

Pencils and paper had been made ready, though most of the scouts carried small note books in which they entered such things as they wished to preserve.

For some little time they watched each deliberate motion of the distant waving flag, no one saying a word. When finally the sign was given that the message had reached its end, every scout started to scribble at hot speed.

Then Elmer walked along the line, examining the various records.

"Pretty well done," he said after he had completed his examination, "but of course it was the easiest of tests, for we all felt sure the report would be that they were in sight. They are crossing Jupiter Lake right now. That means they will be with us inside of an hour and a half, for Ginger is rowing stoutly, Matty says, and Mr. Eggleston seems to be getting ready to take the second pair of oars himself for the pull up Paradise Creek, which you may remember is no cinch, fellows."

"That's right," declared Larry Billings, rubbing his arm, the muscles of which had been more or less sore ever since that strain.

"It's going to be a long hour and a half," said Jasper Merriweather.

"Oh! rats, just go and play with the monkey, to kill time," laughed Lil Artha.

"I'm just wild to see what Ginger does when we take him to meet his 'debble,'" observed Toby, who had of course been hovering over that magical balloon pretty much all the morning; indeed, so long as that was around they could hardly get the ambitious amateur aviator to do anything worth while.

"Somebody coming back yonder; I saw 'em flit past that open place," remarked Nat Scott, pointing upward.

"Yes, that's Ted and Chatz, returning from the lone cabin. They promised to be back early, because they didn't want to miss the fun when Ginger came," declared the scout leader.

Within the next half hour not only did Ted and his companion arrive, but the two videttes and signal men reached camp. Having discharged the duty to which they had been assigned, Matty Eggleston and Jack Armitage had lost no time in heading once more down the mountain.

Now an hour had gone, and the half was passing slowly.

All eyes were turned down the lake to the spot where the creek began, anticipating seeing the boat shoot into view.

"Hurrah! there they come!" shouted one who had climbed a tree, the better to get the first glimpse of the returning couple.

As the boat slipped out on the silvery surface of the lonely lake, so well named Solitude, the cheers that arose must have been particularly pleasing to the young man who was devoting so much of his time to the task of trying to make the Hickory Ridge Boy Scouts the best troops in the county.

But it was Ginger who deliberately dropped his oars, to rise to his feet, and with his black hand over his heart, make several salaams. He came near taking a header over the side of the boat in his eagerness to return the compliments which he really believed the boys were meaning for him, at which of course there was an uproarious laugh all around.

Then came the landing. Ty Collins made sure that the boat contained a lot of packages, and his eyes shone with pleasure as he saw that one of them bore the unmistakable outlines of a whole ham.

"This way, Mr. Garrabrant, we've got a surprise for you!" laughed Elmer.

"You come along, too, Ginger," called Lil Artha, "and make the acquaintance of an old friend of yours. He's been fretting like everything because you were so long getting here. Diablo, here's Ginger coming to shake hands with you!"

Of course they had heaps of fun watching the look on the face of Ginger, as he found himself confronting the hairy thief whom he had seen under such strange conditions, and believed to be a visitor from a warm country where pitchforks are said to be in fashion.

But it required considerable urging for Ginger to actually take the extended hand of the big monkey. Eventually, however, they became quite good friends. Ginger was forever supplying the captive with tidbits, and on his part Diablo seemed to recognize in the dark-skinned man a boon companion.

Of course, after they had their little frolic, and the story of Diablo's capture had been fully told, the boys were eager to know whether Mr. Garrabrant had succeeded in turning the two bad men over to the Rockaway authorities, also if he had happened to run across any of their folks while in Hickory Ridge.

"Make your minds easy, boys," he had replied, laughingly. "Jim and Bill are safely lodged behind the bars in Rockaway jail. I saw Colonel Hitchens, and he paid me the reward that was offered for their capture, which goes to the troop. Later on you boys shall take a vote as to what to do with the money, though I imagine I can give a pretty good guess where it'll go from what I heard you say before about Abe and his kiddies."

"Did you happen to mention the fact that we believed we had his runaway monkey up here as a neighbor, sir?" asked Elmer.

"I certainly did, and he at once declared that if you could only manage to get hold of that rogue, Diablo, it would be another hundred dollars reward," answered the scout master.

"Hurrah!" cried Lil Artha, boisterously, "but the honor goes to Elmer and Mark. They not only did the entire trick, but managed to get a flashlight picture of the monkey going up in the air, with one of his hind legs gripped in the loop of a rope. It's the greatest thing I ever heard about! Wait till you see the picture, sir."

"But how about Hickory Ridge, sir; I suppose it's still

on the map?" asked Elmer, who knew only too well that every fellow was just dying to hear whether the scout master had happened to run across any of their home folks, and what they had said in sending word.

"Well," replied Mr. Garrabrant, with a smile and a nod around; "I've got a pleasant surprise for you all. Having some time on my hands after I had carried out my little business affairs, I just thought it would be nice if I took my car and ran around to the home of every scout who is in camp here on old Solitude!"

"Bully for you, sir!"

"That was mighty fine of you, Mr. Garrabrant, and did you see my folks, sir?"

"Three cheers for our scout master, fellows; ain't he all to the good, though?"

Now, Mr. Garrabrant knew boys and was not in the least offended by such crude ways of expressing their appreciation. He knew it sprang straight from the heart, and was prouder to have won so lasting a place in their regard than he would have been to take a city.

"Yes, I saw the folks of every lad, and bear messages that will please you, I am sure," he observed. "Here they are, just as they were sent by mothers and fathers. And you may be sure they were delighted to learn how well things were going. They want you to stay your time out, and come back, ruddy and brown, better fitted to take up your school duties when vacation ends."

After the packet of little hastily scribbled messages had been distributed, care having been taken by the thoughtful scout master that not a single one might feel neglected, there was a strange silence in camp. Undoubtedly several of the boys were rather perilously near the breaking point, as they began to once more experience the grip of that terrible malady—homesickness.

But Mr. Garrabrant knew, and he it was who began to play with the captive monkey, causing more or less sport, that presently had all the boys laughing uproariously. And so the threatened eruption was avoided. When supper time came they had managed to recover their former steadiness of purpose to stick it out to the end.

But there was not a single member of the troop who did not treasure that little slip of paper, bearing only a few cheering loving words in a familiar hand, during the rest of the stay in camp.

As to what else befell the Hickory Ridge Boy Scouts, and particularly those members of the Wolf Patrol in whom we have had especial interest, time and space will not allow my attempting to narrate here. Later on the opportunity will doubtless arise, so that we shall once more make their acquaintance, and accompany them on other fields of outdoor life, where they continue to imbibe the secrets of Nature that are calculated to make them better fitted to take care of themselves, and be of service to their fellows.

No serious calamity came to pass as the days slipped along. They continued to take toll of the obliging trout that dwelt in Lake Solitude, long acquainted with the hooks and devices of civilized man. And Mr. Garrabrant seldom allowed even a single day to pass without endeavoring to foster in his boys the manly spirit all American lads should possess.

The day before they expected to break camp a party went over to the cabin of Abe Morris and brought him back with them, he being so far recovered, thanks to the treatment of the proud amateur physician, Dr. Ted, that he could limp, with the aid of crutches, and the stout as well as willing arms of the boys to lean upon.

Of course the manly boy, Felix, and the useful maiden,

Little Lou, came along, for the hut was being abandoned forever.

They had places in the boats when the camp was left behind. The wagon as well as a carriage awaited them at exactly the same place where had burned the first camp fire of the expedition, this latter being for the use of Abe and his "kiddies," and the clumsier vehicle for the camp luggage.

As for the scouts themselves they scorned such a means of travel. Browned and healthy, they felt able to walk twice the seven miles that lay between the Sweetwater and Hickory Ridge. And besides, were they not headed for *home,* with all that that implied in their enthusiastic boyish hearts?

We could not, even if we would lift the veil, betray the emotion some of the valiant scouts exhibited when clasped again in the loving arms of a mother of a father. But everybody declared that the change in the boys was wonderful, and that they really seemed to have taken a great step forward in the journey toward manliness. Jasper Merriweather in particular hardly seemed like the same weak, timid boy. He had drawn in a big breath of "outdoors," and glimpsed the goal toward which he was now determined to set his course.

And in Hickory Ridge that night, there was a consensus of opinion to the effect that the Boy Scout movement was by long odds the best thing that had ever happened to quicken the better element lying dormant in every growing lad.

Abe Morris was easily placed in a paying position, and the boys never lost their interest in the boy Felix and Little Lou. Just as they had declared, the rewards coming to them for having effected the capture of the two bad men, as well as the runaway monkey valued so highly by Colonel

Hitchens, were paid over to Abe, and went toward starting the little Morris family in a cottage of their own within the limits of the town of Hickory Ridge.

Doubtless the thoughts of those lads would many times go out to the camp fires which had marked their first outing after organizing. And as they looked over the numerous fine pictures Mark had secured, they would live again the days when they experienced the strenuous life under canvas.

THE END.

WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A SCOUT.

A SCOUT, according to Webster, is "one sent out to gain and bring in information especially of the enemy's movements or condition. In the military sense of the word, a scout is a soldier who does duty in his proper uniform."

As a verb, scout means "to follow, observe, watch or look for as a scout." In that one word "observe" we have the keynote of scouting. The boy scout must know how to use his eyes and ears as do the scouts of warfare who are picked men selected on account of their resourcefulness, quick wit, keen observation, bravery and caution, and as did the pioneer American colonists and the frontiersmen in the early years of this country's history.

It is necessary for a scout to know about the woods that he may find his way through them without getting lost; he must know what roots are useful as medicines and what plants should be avoided as poisons.

It is necessary for him to know the wild animals that he may encounter; he must keenly observe their marks and tracks.

It is necessary for him to be able to build shelter for himself in the open and to know how and where to pitch his camp.

He must know how to preserve his health; doctors are not at his beck and call when scouting.

He must be strong and brave, prepared to face danger, prepared to save the lives of his companions.

It was only those of the pioneers that were best fitted to live their strenuous, self-reliant life who survived the trials. Holding these characteristics in our mind as examples we gain some idea of the meaning of the word "scout."

Before one decides to join the boy scouts' organization he should question himself honestly and conscientiously as to whether he is willing to strive to live up to the ideals set before him.

You will find, if you inquire, that the scout organization in your town is composed of one or more troops; each of these troops is made up of three or more patrols; and there are eight boys in each patrol, and one of these boys is the patrol leader. The troop is led by an adult who is known as the scout master. The lowest order of scout is known as a tenderfoot; then there is a second-class scout and a first-class scout, each of whom must be able to qualify by passing an examination; that is, he must be able to do certain things, before he is entitled to his standing.

Before becoming a scout, a boy must take an oath or make a promise to be dutiful, obedient, helpful and true.

The boy scout in his games and scout work endeavors to put into practice and acquire by these games and work such knowledge as the scout should have.

A patrol will often make a specialty of some particular feature of scoutcraft which appeals to its members, for instance: they might go in for camp life, they might go in

for woodcraft, nature study, cycling, gardening, camera work, or combine two or more of these or whatever will teach them to go about with their eyes open and cultivate a self-reliant spirit.

The national headquarters of the Boy Scouts of America will be glad to give you any information you may want in regard to this movement and tell you how to join it.

In this series of books, of which this is Number I, you will find at the end of each story articles on different topics which will be interesting and appeal to the boy scout. These are listed on the following page.

THE WILD ANIMALS OF THE UNITED STATES.

The animal kingdom is separated into two great divisions: the lower form of animals belonging to the invertebrate division and the higher form are the vertebrate or animals having backbones. The higher class of vertebrate animals are known as mammals, and this class is again divided into three subclasses. Most of the vertebrate animals which the American boy is likely to meet will be found in the third of these subclasses, although the opossum is an example of the subclass known as the Metatheria.

The Opossum.

The opossum inhabits North America and is hunted for the sake of its flesh. When it perceives the hunter it lies still between the branches, but if disturbed from its hiding place it attempts to escape by dropping among the herbage and creeping silently away. Its food consists of insects, birds' eggs, etc., and it is very destructive among the henroosts. The opossum uses its tail for climbing and swinging from branch to branch and makes it also a support for its young, who sit on its back and twist their tails around their mother's in order to prevent themselves from falling. When overtaken by its pursuers it can simulate death so admirably that it frequently defeats the

foe; the length of the opossum is about twenty-two inches and its height about that of the ordinary cat.

COMMON OPOSSUM.

Of the third subclass, known as the Eutheria, there are nine orders, but in this article we are only interested in

five of these: the hoofed mammals, the gnawing mammals, the carnivorous mammals, the insect-eating mammals and the bats.

THE HOOFED MAMMALS.

The Deer.

To the first order belong all deer. These animals bear on the head of the male sex alone branching antlers which are shed and renewed annually.

The Virginia deer is remarkable for its peculiar horns, which bend boldly backward and then suddenly curve forward. Its color is reddish brown in spring and dull brown in winter. It is found everywhere from Canada to Mexico and from the Atlantic to the Rocky Mountains. It is a very good swimmer, and loves to go into deep water to get rid of ticks and other insects. When it is near settled districts it will leap fences and browse on the crops, but at other times feeds on the young grasses of the plains. In the months of August, September and October it is very fat and the venison is very fine. It is fond of salt, and resorts in great numbers to salt lakes. The skin of the deer is very valuable, and is used to form the greater part of the Indian's dress.

The elk of Europe is practically the same as the moose of America; the deer popularly called " elk " in the western United States is the American red deer.

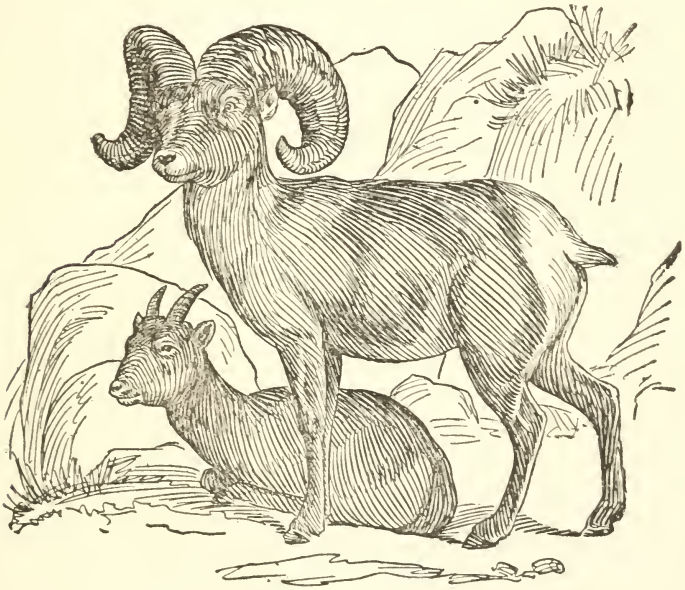
The moose is the largest of the deer family and found in the forest, especially where water is abundant; it will crash through thick brush without trouble; it is fond of

wading in marshy rivers; its principal diet consists of leaves and tender brush. In the autumn the bull moose often engages in ferocious encounters with rivals.

RED DEER.

The Bighorn.

The bighorn, or Rocky Mountain sheep, has the body of a deer and the head of a sheep. It is very large and extremely wild, and is found in the western and northwestern mountains of North America. Its horns are of



BIGHORN SHEEP.

an enormous size, and make a large semicircular curve backward. The head and horns often weigh sixty pounds. Its hair is short and gray, but in the fall changes to dun and becomes longer, while in winter a large quantity of fine

wool, which never shows outside the hair, grows close to the skin. It is found in troops of twenty or thirty in rocky districts, which it leaves only to get water. It is very shy and takes flight at the first appearance of a man. Its flesh is in good condition from August till November. General Dodge says if one can imagine a saddle of South-down mutton flavored with the gamey juices of the black-tail deer he will form some idea of a feast of mountain sheep in season.

THE GNAWING MAMMALS.

The gnawing mammals are the rats, mice, rabbits, beavers, squirrels, etc. They have been called gnawing because of their habit of gnawing the substances on which they feed. For this purpose their teeth are admirably formed. In the front of each jaw there are two long flat teeth, slightly curved, and having a kind of chisel edge for rasping away wood or other articles. The constant labor which these teeth undergo would rapidly wear them away. To counteract this loss, the teeth are constantly growing and being pushed forward, so that as fast as the upper part is worn away, the tooth is replenished from below.

The brown rat, sometimes called the Norway rat, is the species usually found in England and America. It is at all times difficult to get rid of these dirty, noisy animals, for they soon learn to keep out of the way of traps; and if they are poisoned they revenge their fate by dying behind a wainscot or under a plank of the floor, and make the room uninhabitable.

The water rat is very common on banks of rivers, brooks, etc. It does not eat fish, but gnaws the green bark from reeds, which it completely strips, leaving the mark of each tooth as it proceeds.

The common mouse is so well known that a description of its form and size is useless. It almost rivals the rat in its attacks upon our provisions, and is quite as difficult to extirpate. It brings up its young in a kind of nest, and when a board of long standing is taken up in a room it is not uncommon to find under it a mouse's nest, composed of rags, string, paper, shavings, and everything that the ingenious little architect can scrape together. It is a round mass, looking something like a rag ball very loosely made. When opened, seven or eight little mice will probably be found in the interior—little pink, transparent creatures, three of which could go into a lady's thimble, sprawling about in an unmeaning manner, apparently greatly distressed at the sudden cold caused by the opening of their nest.

A white mouse is tolerably common. As it is very tame and beautiful, it is in some repute as a pet.

The harvest mouse is very much smaller than the ordinary mouse. Its nest is raised about a foot and a half from the ground, and supported on two or three straws. The nest is made of grass, about the size of a baseball.

The beaver. North America is the principal country where the beaver is found, but it is also to be found on the Euphrates, and along some of the larger European rivers, as the Rhine and the Danube.

The houses of the beaver are built of mud, stones, and

sticks. They are placed in a stream, and their entrance is always below the surface. As a severe frost would freeze up their doors, it is necessary to make the stream deep enough to prevent the frost from reaching the entrances. This object is attained by building a dam across the river, to keep back the water until it is sufficiently

BEAVERS.

deep for the beaver's purposes. The dam is made of branches which the beaver cuts down with its strong, sharp teeth, and mud and stones worked in among the branches. The beavers throw these branches into the water, and sink them to the bottom by means of stones, and by continually throwing in fresh supplies a strong

embankment is soon made. The mud and stones used in their embankments are not carried on their tails, as some say, nor do the beavers use their tails as trowels for laying on the mud; the fact being that the stones and mud are carried between their chin and fore paws, and the mistake respecting the tail is evidently caused by the slap that beavers give with that member when they dive. Every year the beavers lay a fresh coating of mud upon their houses, so that after the lapse of a few years the walls of the house are several feet in thickness. Many of the houses are built close together, but no two families can communicate with each other, except by diving below the walls and rising inside their neighbor's house.

When in captivity the beaver becomes tame, and will industriously build dams across the corner of a room with brushes, boots, fire irons, books, or anything it can find. When its edifice is finished, it sits in the center apparently satisfied that it has made a beautiful structure to dam up the river—a proof that the ingenuity of the beaver is not caused by reason, but by instinct. The fur of the beaver, like that of many other animals, consists of a fine wool intermixed with long and stiff hairs. Its length is about three and a half feet.

The hare, when full grown, is larger than the rabbit, and exceedingly like that animal. But its color is slightly different. The hare makes a kind of nest of grass and other materials. In this nest, called a "form," the hare lies, crouching to the ground, its ears laid along its back; and trusting to its concealment, will often remain quiet until the foot of an intruder almost touches it.

The rabbit is smaller than the hare, but resembles it in form. It lives in deep holes, which it digs in the ground. The female rabbit forms a soft nest at the bottom of her burrow, composed of fur torn from her body, of hay and dried leaves. Here the young rabbits are kept until they are strong enough to shift for themselves and make their own burrows.

The squirrel is a very common animal in woods, where numbers may be seen frisking about on the branches, or run-

SQUIRREL.

ning up and down the trunks of trees. If alarmed it springs up the tree with extraordinary agility, and hides behind a branch. By this trick it escapes its enemy, the hawk, and by constantly slipping behind the large branches frequently tires him out. The agility and daring of this little animal are extraordinary. When pursued, it makes the most

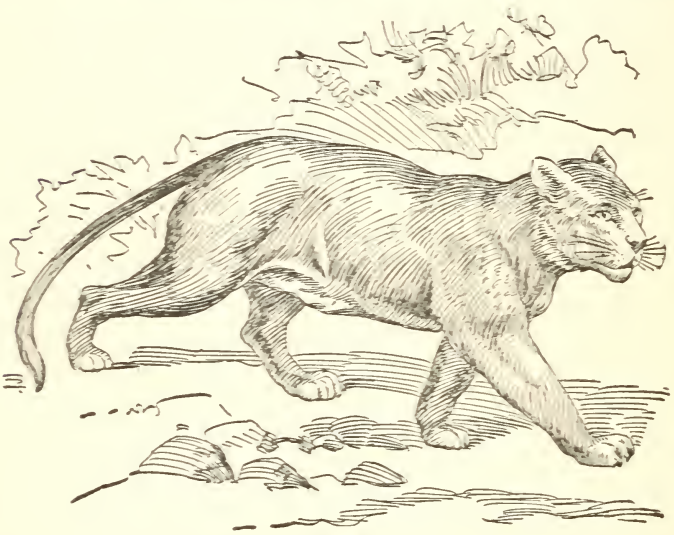
astonishing leaps from branch to branch, or from tree to tree, and has apparently some method of altering its direction while in the air, possibly by means of its tail acting as a rudder. It is easily domesticated, and is very amusing in its habits when suffered to go at large in a room or kept in a spacious cage; but when confined in a little cramped box, especially in one of the cruel wheel cages, its energies and playfulness are quite lost. The color is a deep reddish brown or gray, and its tail so large and bushy as to shade its whole body when carried curled over its back. Its food consists of nuts, seeds, bark and fruit, but at times it eats eggs and young birds. It lays up in the autumn a supply of food to last it over the winter, when its food supply is limited. Its young are often as many as four or five in number.

THE CARNIVOROUS MAMMALS.

The Cat Family.

Among these, the puma, or mountain lion, inhabited formerly the whole of America, but is no longer found east of the Rocky Mountain district. It belongs to the animals of the cat kind; the cats all take their prey by creeping up as near as they can without observation and then springing suddenly upon their victim; their jaws are powerful and their teeth long and sharp; their claws, too, are very long and curved and sharp and are drawn back when not in use into a sheath which guards them and keeps them sharp. There are five claws on the fore feet and

four on the hind feet; the tongue is very rough, as may be proved by feeling the tongue of the common cat; this roughness is occasioned by innumerable little grooves which cover the tongue and are used for licking the flesh off the bones of their prey. The bristles of the mouth are useful when the animal prowls by night; their eyes are adapted



PUMA.

for night work, the pupil extending so as to take in every ray of light. The color of the puma is gray, shading into white on the under parts of its body; it lives much on trees and usually lies among the branches. We always speak of this animal as the panther or painter, as it is more familiarly pronounced; some term it the cougar, a

word contracted from the original elongated unpronounceable Mexican name "gouazouara." The usual length of the body is somewhat less than four feet. It is especially destructive to sheep, and a single puma has been known to kill a hundred in a single night. It is timid, but will defend itself with vigor when at bay, rarely attacking a man except when angered. It runs from dogs, and when

LYNX.

cornered climbs a tree. If overtaken before it can do this, it will fight to the death. South of the United States it is called "lion."

The lynxes are remarkable for the tassel of hairs which tufts their sharply pointed ears. They are brown or gray in color, spotted with a darker shade. The Canada lynx is a native of North America; its method of progression is

by bounds from all four feet at once with its back arched; it feeds particularly on hare, lives largely in trees and is savage and ferocious; its length is about three feet; its fur is thick and soft and forms an important article of commerce, the skins having a considerable market value. It is becoming rare in the civilized districts, but still is found in the less settled parts of the United States. It makes its dens in hollow trees, holes in rocks, etc. It is hunted with dogs, which tree it, and is also caught in traps. Two to four young are produced each year.

The Dog Family.

The dog family includes, dogs, wolves, jackals and foxes.

The wolf has very much the form of a large, long-legged dog with a dark tail; the hair is long, rough and thick, and of a grayish color mixed with black. The American wolf is slightly different from that of the old world. The gray wolf is more robust than that of Europe, and has a straight bushy tail. The black wolf is now found chiefly in Florida; the red wolf of Texas is more slender than the others. Wolves usually prowl at night and spend the daytime in their den—a cave, tree or burrow. They hunt especially in the winter in packs and are very destructive to sheep and deer, often leaving the carcass almost untouched. Animal food in any state of decay is not obnoxious to the wolf. Young wolves are born in the spring and there are usually six to ten in each litter. The wolf may be tamed if taken when young.

The Fox.

The fox gives out a strong disagreeable scent which lies so long on the ground that it may be perceived for nearly an hour after the fox has passed; partly on this account, and partly on account of its cunning, the chase of the fox is one of the most popular English sports.

The coyote, or prairie wolf, lives on the great plains of North America; is much smaller than the common wolf, but has much thicker and longer fur, so that it looks bigger than it really is; and a very odd thing about it is that it is different colored at different seasons of the year, being yellowish brown in the summer and grayish white or even a light gray in the winter; the back is darker than the rest of the body and the tail is rather long, very bushy indeed. It now inhabits the Great Plains and the Pacific Coast. It is a pest in ranching districts.

The Skunk.

The skunk is a North American animal, about the size of a cat; has a long, narrow head, a stoutly built body and a big bushy tail; in color it is black with a white streak on the forehead, a white patch on the neck and a broad strip of the same color running along either side of the back. The offensive odor of the skunk is due to the liquid which is stored up in certain glands near the root of the tail. This liquid can be squirted out at a distance

of twelve to fifteen feet, and if the animal is attacked or finds itself in danger, instead of attempting to use its teeth, it sends a perfect shower of the vile fluid over its enemy. It is almost impossible to wash the smell away. A drop or two once fell on the coat of a dog; the animal was washed over and over again most thoroughly and with various kinds of soap, yet a week later, when he happened to rub himself against one of the legs of the table, no one could bear to sit by it afterwards. The skunk seems to know perfectly well how disgusting its odor is and never runs away if it meets a man or even a large dog. It stands perfectly quiet, ready to make use of this vile-smelling fluid if necessary. This animal lives in holes in the ground, making a nest at the end in which to bring up its young; it feeds upon small animals, small birds and their eggs, frogs, lizards and insects. Many of the animals of the weasel tribe have a most disagreeable odor, but there is none whose scent is so horribly disgusting as that of the skunk.

The Weasel.

The weasels are easily distinguished by their long, slender, snake-like bodies, short muzzle and predatory habits; most all of the weasels devour the brain and suck the blood of their prey, but seldom touch the flesh. The shape of their bodies fits them for getting through the small holes of the habitations of their prey. They vary from six to ten inches in length. In color they are brown above and white

below. The food of weasels is made up of rats, mice, moles, small birds, and often rabbits and poultry. They produce several litters of young annually, four or five to the litter.

The Marten.

There are two kinds of martens, the pine marten and the beech marten. The pine marten is not uncommon in North America, where it is much too fond of chickens and ducklings to be a desirable neighbor. This animal, as well as the sable, is much sought after on account of its skin, which furnishes a beautiful fur. It spends most of its time in trees and builds its nest like the squirrel in a tree hollow. The marten preys upon small birds and animals, and is a very bloodthirsty little creature. It is now very rarely found in civilized districts.

The Badger.

The badger is a harmless animal which lives at the bottom of deep burrows in which it passes all the day; when the evening approaches it seeks its food, consisting of roots, fruit, insects and sometimes young rabbits. Its skin is rather valuable, the hair being extensively employed in the manufacture of brushes. The length of the badger is about twenty-seven inches.

This animal is harmless when let alone, but will bite if disturbed and aroused. Its chief habitat now is the plains of the western states, and there it preys largely on ground

squirrels. It was formerly considered a sport to tease and annoy these animals and bait them against dogs—hence the coining of the verb "to badger," meaning to worry. It has blackish stripes on the face, but in general color it is gray. The hair is long.

The Otter.

The otter seems to play the same part in the water as the weasels on land; it slides noiselessly into the water, turns and twists about below the surface with the same ease as a fish, then with a sweep of the body it slides to the surface and ascends the bank with almost the same motion; while below the surface it resembles the seal.

The fur is thick, and easily throws off the water. In color it is dark brown and its pelt is prized and in demand. The teeth are so constructed that the slippery fish is easily held. The animal lives in rocks, logs and cavities around lakes and rivers. In North America the otter has now become scarce. In parts of Canada it is still numerous, and its fur is much sought. It is easily tamed, but has not a disposition desirable in a pet. Both young and old otters are very playful, and it is entertaining to watch them while at play. Otter skins formed one of the exports of the pioneering colonists of the United States.

The Bears.

The bears and their allies are mostly heavy, and walk with the whole foot flat on the ground, unlike the cats, dogs, etc., which walk with merely their paws or toes. All the bears are omnivorous, that is, they eat both animal and vegetable food. The black bear is found in North America; its total length is about five feet; it prefers vegetable food, but when pressed by hunger will kill and eat small animals. It kills its prey by hugging or squeezing with its fore paws. Great numbers of black bears are killed for their skins, which have a smooth glossy fur and are valuable for cloaks, caps, etc. This animal is an expert climber, is very fond of honey and green corn, and is less fierce and dangerous than the brown bear. The grizzly bear is a native of North America; it is the most ferocious and powerful of this family, and is an animal which must be either avoided or fought, for there is no medium; if a grizzly once sees a man it will probably chase him, and will do so with great perseverance. An American traveler was chased nearly thirty miles by one of these bears, which would probably have kept up this chase for many miles more had the traveler not crossed a wide river over which the bear did not choose to follow him.

The Raccoon.

The raccoon is about the size of the fox, and is an inhabitant of Canada and other parts of America; it is said to wash its food before eating it; its skin is valuable and is much sought after. The food of the raccoon is particularly small animals, although it also eats fruits and vegetable matter; like a squirrel when eating a nut, the raccoon usually holds its food between its fore paws pressed together, and sits upon its hind quarters when it eats. Like the fox, it prowls by night. The color of the body is brown and the face is marked with black. The tail is ringed with black and white. It rarely leaves the trees during the daytime. The chase of the raccoon is considered great sport in the southern states.

They are trapped for their fur, and also hunted with dogs, which find the tree where they are lodged and bark about it until their masters arrive to shoot the animals. Often it is necessary to chop down the tree before the coon is caught.

INSECT-EATING MAMMALS.

The most commonly known of the insect-eating animals are the mole and the shrewmouse.

The Mole.

The eyes of the mole are very small in order to prevent them from being injured by the earth through which the

animal makes its way. The acute ears and delicate sense of smell supply the place of keen sight; its fur is very fine, soft, capable of turning in any direction, and will not retain a particle of mould. The two fore paws are composed of five fingers, armed with sharp strong nails in order to scrape up the earth, and the hands are turned outward, so as to throw the earth out of its way. It is a good swimmer and can pass from bank to bank or from the shore to an island, and when the fields are inundated by floods it can save itself by swimming. The construction of the mole's habitation is very singular and interesting. Each mole has its own habitation and hunting ground, and will not allow strangers to trespass upon its preserves, which it guards not by "man traps" and "spring-guns," but by claws and teeth. The animals work desperately for several hours, and then rest for as many hours; the mode of building is by rooting up the earth with its snout, and then scraping it away with its fore feet. The depth at which this animal works depends almost entirely on the time of the year; in the summer the worm comes to the surface, and the mole accordingly follows it, making quite superficial runs, and sometimes only scooping trenches on the surface, but in the winter when the worms sink into the ground the mole is forced to follow them, to work in the hard soil, as it did in the earth near the surface. The moles vary in color, the usual tint being a very deep brown, almost black, but they have

been seen of an orange color, and the white variety is not uncommon.

The Shrew.

The shrewmouse is very like the common mouse, but is distinguished from it by the length of the nose, which is used for grubbing up the earth in search of insects. A peculiar scent is diffused from these animals, which is possibly the reason why the cat will not eat them, although she will readily destroy them. The shrew is not connected with the true mouse, but belongs to a different class of animals, its teeth being sharp and pointed, whereas those of the mouse are broad and chisel-shaped. In the autumn numbers of these little animals may be seen lying dead, but what causes their destruction is not known.

Its diet is composed of insects, worms, snails, slugs. Cats, weasels and owls are its enemies.

BATS.

The fore paws and hands of the bats are developed into wings by thin membrane; the usual food of bats is insects, which they capture mostly on the wing. The membrane of the young is extremely sensitive and the elongation of the finger joints gives the animals the power of extending or folding it. The finger joint has no part of the wing attached to it, but is left free and is armed with a hook at the extremity by which it is enabled to drag itself along.

TRACKING.

You should not be discouraged into thinking that since you live in a center of civilization there is no opportunity for you to observe wild animal life in its native haunts. Just keep your eyes open in your tramps through the woods and fields. Notice that peculiar dotted line running across the snow, which means that the cottontail rabbit has been here at this place possibly a few minutes before you arrived. The mark of the rabbit is always known by two larger footprints followed by two smaller footprints. This is because the animal swings its hind legs in front of its fore paws as it runs, and the direction in which the rabbit has gone can always be determined by noting the position of the larger marks. There are still a great many wild animals within a short distance of your home even if you live in as large a city as New York. Ernest Thompson Seton tells us that there are fully fifty different kinds of wild animals, not counting birds, reptiles or fish, within twenty miles of this city, and of this number at least one dozen are to be found in abundant numbers.

The American Indians were very clever in reading tracks, not only of animals but of white men and their own race. No better books, giving the characteristics of

the Indians in that regard, were ever written than Cooper's "Leather Stocking Tales," and we recommend that the boy who has not read these secure them and read them at once. The easiest season of the year to track the wild animal is when the snow is on the ground, because then each creature as it journeys over the snow leaves the diary of its trip written in footprints. You will be astonished in making a little journey into the woods or fields on a winter's day to discover the footprints of animals in places where you had not supposed such animals existed. There they are, however, crossing and criss-crossing. Each animal has a different handwriting, or rather footwriting. The rabbit is different from that of the squirrel; the squirrel from that of the mouse; the deer and the mouse from that of the musk-rat. In the case of the musk-rat track you will notice a long streak accompanies the footprints. This streak is made by the animal's tail as it drags behind through the snow. The track of the deer's hoofprint is shaped like an inverted bisected heart; the track of the hawk is not unlike that of the ordinary barnyard chicken. The trailer, upon running across a track, should be careful, of course, to follow it in the direction in which the animal is going. The track of the squirrel is very similar to that of the rabbit, with the exception that it is smaller, the footprints closer together and the prints of the fore feet are on a horizontal line instead of a vertical line. The raccoon's tracks are larger than that of the rabbit, closer together and similar in placing to that of the squirrel.

The marks made by a bird which lives on the ground are clawprints in two lines, the print being first on one side and then on the other as the bird walks. The bird which lives in the trees hops over the ground; its prints are made in pairs on a parallel line.

A story is told of the pursuit of a band of American Indians; the Indians had a start of nearly a week and were traveling on horseback. A famous tracking scout was called in to assist in trailing them; they followed the Indians for six days and for much of the time there was nothing visible to any eye except that of the scout that would indicate that their quarry had passed that way. After a chase of 150 miles they eventually overtook and captured them.

Another instance is told of where tracking was done by night; Indian scouts were used in this instance and found their way in the darkness by the sense of touch, feeling the tracks with their hands, and surprised and captured their quarry. An expert tracker must continually practice reading tracks every time he is out walking. After a little practice and experience the scout will be able to tell whether the man or animal that he is trailing is going at a rapid or a slow pace. A walking man walks on the whole flat of his foot, each footprint being a little less than a yard than the other; when he runs the toes dig slightly into the ground and the prints are farther apart.

When animals move rapidly, prints are also deeper and farther apart. Study the track of a horse and try to

determine whether it is walking, trotting or galloping. Sometimes a track is lost and it is necessary to make what is known as a "cast" in order to locate it again. Mark the last footprint with a stone, your staff or some object that will easily show up, and then using this as a center work around it in a circle until you find where the track is renewed again. It is better for one or two if tracking in a party to make the "cast" rather than have everybody try to find the track. The reason for this is obvious; the footprints of the trackers would soon confuse or possibly break the trail. In making the "cast" first survey the surroundings and try to imagine which way the animal would naturally go.

There are several entertaining games which the boy scouts can play which will help them in the practice of trailing; one is to make the patrol sit with their feet up so that the other scouts can make a study of them, then one of the patrol makes some footprints while the others are out of sight, the scouts are then called, one at a time, to see the track and to tell who made it.

Another game is known as "Catch the Thief"; some article is hung up in the quarters of the scouts and the umpire goes to each scout in turn and whispers "there is a thief in the camp"; to one he adds "and you are he" and also gives the name of some well known place about a mile or so away. That boy then steals the article, unnoticed, sometime within the next few hours and gets away with it to the place mentioned. As soon as one of the

other scouts sees that the article is gone he gives the alarm and all start off in pursuit of the thief, tracking him by his footprints. The scout who finds the stolen article wins; if nobody finds it the thief wins.